BIG BATTLE IN THE CHANNEL IMMINENT. (See Page 586.)

SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 488. FOR WEEK ENDING MAY 7TH, 1898. [ONE PENNY.

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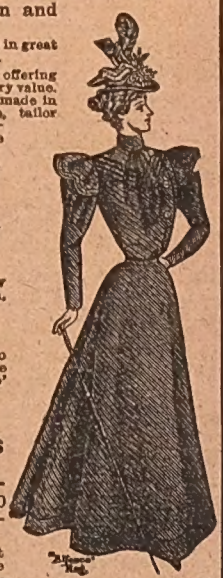

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SHORT STORIES.

No. 488.] [One Penny.

For the Week ending May 7th, 1898.

IN A LANE.

The Tramp shuffled wearily into the lane. It was an ordinary country lane; a farmhouse and low wall on one side, on the other a hedge of tall trees. The Tramp shuffled into it from the high road because he was dead beat. He did not know to where it led; he didn't much care. He would have thrown himself down on the grassy bank under the trees, but the Farmer stood at the gate, watching. For very shame the tired man shuffled on. He dared not even ask for food—he had been refused so often lately. Besides, he had taken the edge off his appetite with sundry herbs and berries, and, it must be confessed, with a turnip stolen from a well-filled field. Hunger has a wonderful way of altering one's moral views. Necessity knows no law, human or divine.

The Tramp ambled along as slowly as he could, keeping his weather eye on the red-bearded farmer. He muttered swear words to himself, anathematizing the whole agricultural population. He consigned Red-Beard to a climate less severely frigid than that of the Arctic Regions.

The Farmer stood watching him suspiciously. So many queer characters were about, and you never knew.

Edited By George Arthur Pearson.

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The crops were rather a failure this year. He couldn't afford to have any of his live-stock stolen, and this out-at-elbows tramp, with his furtive glance, his dawdling gait, his long thin arms and fingers—the Farmer noticed these—looked none too honest. He wished the Tramp would take his hook and be—well, condemned.

"Hey, there!" he called at last. "What's your game—hangin' about here?"

The Tramp started violently and stopped. He came back a step or so, mumbling.

"Speak up, man!" shouted the Farmer. "I can't hear them silent phonographs!"

"I'm only a tramp; haven't a thing on me except these rags, Farmer," said Out-at-Elbows. "I'm tryin' to get to Workleigh yonder, to look for a job. I'm dead beat."

His last sentence ended in a wheedling snivel. It was getting second nature to him now.

"Better hurry on then," said the Farmer, ramming his red hands in his pockets. "We hain't no work here nor no charity neither. We've enuff to do to keep our own end up. We've got two fine dogs, though, with good, sound teeth."

He paused, to let the intelligence sink into the Tramp's mind. Then, feeling a little relieved of his suspicions, he fished out a penny.

"Take that and be off!" he grunted shortly. "It's all you'll get here, and a wonder you've got that!"

The Tramp took it servilely, touched his forehead and mumbled incoherent thanks, then shuffled on again. The Farmer chuckled to himself, and went in, putting the peg of the chain in the staple on the inside of the gate. The moment he was out of sight the Tramp crossed the lane and dossed on the turf. A low gorse bush hid him from the farm house.

"Something like," he jerked, with an imprecation. He kicked off his boots. They had been a misfit of somebody's, and certainly were never made for him. He stretched his long arms, pillowed his head in his hands, and went to sleep. A new melody soon mingled with the chirping of the birds, the buzzing of the insects, the rustle of the leaves in the breeze. The flies made a cluster over him, but they did not stay. The gnats that bite one in the shade of trees and among long grass did not bite him. His tramp's blood was not rich enough for those tiny beasts of prey. A tramp's blood is often deficient in the red corpuscles.

He slept awhile undisturbed. The blazing heat of noon scorched his thin face. The heat passed and the shadow of the trees fell over him again. Some time towards the end of the afternoon a creeping thing of some kind got in his open mouth and woke him. He sat up, spluttering it out, and rubbed his eyes.

"Must be getting on," he thought, and glancing over the bush, looked up and down the lane. The farmyard gate was still shut, but he heard a dog barking. No one was in sight. He noticed, inconsequently, that the column of smoke from the kitchen chimney rose straight upwards; that the western sky was taking a pale, red tinge. Fine weather to-morrow, whatever good that might be.

He put on his boots, got to his feet awkwardly, and went on shuffling up the lane. From the look of things it promised to be a short cut to the town, whose smoke hung like a shroud over the valley yonder. He walked in the middle of the road; a solitary figure on the crown of the macadam. The evening was very still and beautiful. The smell of the hay was in the air; the mellowed peal of church bells floated up from the village down there on the right. But for that he would not have troubled to remember that it was Wednesday night.

After all, what was Wednesday to him, more than any other revolution of the earth? He was an outcast of society; one of the "manufactured residuum of civilization;" a man without any use in the universe. He was one of those, he thought,—he had once, in more fortunate days, attended a course of lectures on "*Physics and Politics*"—who were being crushed underfoot in the march of Progress. He was one of the unnecessary; one of the unfit: it followed naturally that he must go under. The race of life is to the swift, the battle to the strong, the prize to the clever. The fittest must survive. Nature knows no other mark of merit. She gives life recklessly, uses it carelessly, takes it away ruthlessly. Why not? Yet—he held his solitary penny in his fist until it burnt him as a circle of fire. Somehow, the memory of those lectures, blurred by this time, it is true, was little comfort to him. To-morrow stared him in the face. Better have been born an animal, without reason. Animals, at least, take no thought nor heed for the morrow, what they shall eat nor what they shall *drink*.

He was now near the end of the lane, where it came at right angles into another. He was startled out of his maudlin reflections by the sound of a child's sobbing. The sound came nearer. He saw something red bobbing up and down now and then over the edge of the stone wall, and nearing the corner. Now the sobs ceased, stifled, now they broke out again violently.

"Some kid in trouble," he jerked out. "Funny thing—what kids cry for!"

Just then the red object reached the corner of the wall. It was the red "soot-bag" cap of a little girl. She turned into the lane and came on, meeting the Tramp. He looked at her curiously, and stopped; he didn't know why. I suppose if it had been a little boy he would have shuffled on carelessly. But it wasn't, so there's an end of speculation.

She was a pretty little thing, though she was doing her best to make herself ugly. Her cheeks were like rosy red apples, her hair was sunny gold, her eyes were large and blue. The blue-serge dress and little white apron she wore suited her small figure well. At present the said apple cheeks were disfigured with the courses of tears, and the blue eyes ringed with dirt that the chubby knuckles had rubbed in. The Tramp somehow felt sorry for that, though he didn't want to feel sorry for anyone's misfortunes just then. When he stopped, she stopped too; ceased her sobbing and looked up at him wonderingly. She was yet too young to understand the sanctity of social distinctions. Out-at-Elbows felt that he must say something.

"What's matter, little 'un?" he asked.

The chubby knuckles, half-raised to the blue eyes, dropped again. The blue eyes opened wide, showing very moist with imminent tears.

"I'se—lost—it," she said, parting each syllable with a breath and a sob.

"Lost what?"

"I'se lost—it," she repeated. It never occurred to her that anyone would be ignorant of what "it" was. "I'se lost it, an' dad'll be so cross. He'll——"

But at contemplation of what "dad" would do, her sobbing broke out afresh. The blue eyes were eclipsed again. The Tramp felt still more curious.

"But what's it you've lost, little 'un?" he asked, sticking his hands in his pockets and striking an in-

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terrogative attitude. The little girl put down her doubled fists an'inch or so.

"She gave it me to buy some 'judes at Mrs. Sandlin's, and I wasn't to have 'nother for a w-eek."

The Tramp guessed "judes" must be jujubes, and Mrs. Sandlin's a sweetstuff shop in some near village. "She," of course, was mother. Grim irony, come to think of it, this kid crying because she couldn't spoil her teeth with that rubbish, and he—well, his luck. Little Blue-Eyes went on, feeling better for telling her trouble.

"An' it was on'y a penny, and I hadn't had one since Sunday, an' dad says, mustn't never get pennies lost, cos it's bad prin-ci-ple."

She brought out the last word with an effort, yet with a touch of pride in the accomplishment of so big a piece of language.

"Whereabouts did you drop it?" queried Out-at-Elbows. "We might come across it yet."

"Dunno. It's long way to Mrs. Sandlin's, and—dunno."

Then a new idea came into her little mind. She looked up at the Tramp hopefully.

"You'se big. Do you know anywhere where little girls can get pennies—when they'se lost theirs? There must be somewhere—when they'se really lost their pennies."

The justice of her logic seemed perfect in her eyes, but the Tramp shook his head. He had never observed much justice, anyway. "Don't think so," he said gravely. Then an odd idea came into *his* mind. Something in his pocket burnt his fingers. He could not help the ghost of a smile at the very thought of that. The blue eyes were quick to notice every change of feature, and they filled with tears again.

"I'se goin'," she said. "You'se no good."

That settled him. He didn't feel much of a hero; but it was perhaps the most unselfish act in his wasted life.

"Here, little 'un," he said huskily. "I reckon that'll stop you crying. An' you'd better be running to Mrs. Sandlin's if you want to get home afore it's dark."

The chubby fingers closed on the coin greedily. Her face brightened. It was sun after shower.

"Thank you," she said, with childish politeness. Then, ignoring her former verdict with sublime indifference: "I knowed you'd help me. But I'se goin' home now. It's far away to Mrs. Sandlin's, an' I can go in the mornin'. Shan't get it lost 'gain!"

She clutched the precious coin tightly, and was ready to go; began walking on down the lane. But the Tramp was yet curious. He wanted to know one thing more—and felt sure of the answer as the thought flashed across him.

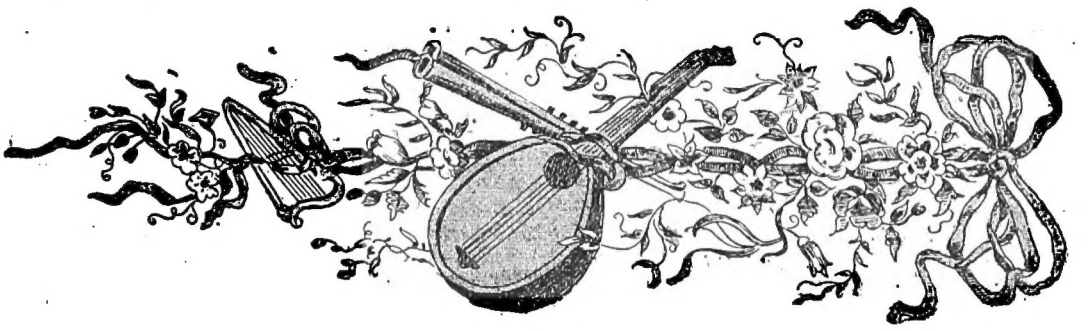
"Say, little 'un; where do you live?"

"That's our house," she said, pointing to the solitary farm behind him. "That's Carlo barkin'. It's suppertime."

She ended with a child's abruptness, and started running. Out-at-Elbows watched her little figure down the path, noticing uninterestedly how queerly the tail of her soot-bag cap danced on her little shoulders. He saw her open the gate and turn in; heard the click of the peg in the staple again.

Then the Tramp spoke rapidly but vividly under his breath, and shuffled wearily out of the lane. The sun was now setting in a sea of crimson and gold.

GEORGE C. WALLIS.



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"By Jove, I know that woman!" exclaimed Sellon.

"You do? Where did you make her acquaintance?" asked his companion.

"Well, Crossland, perhaps it is going too far to say that I know her," returned Sellon, not noticing the other's tone of surprise. "But I recognise in her a girl whom I was able to save from being run over in London some years ago. I feel certain she is the same. She gave promise of becoming a pretty woman; but she is more than pretty, she is positively beautiful! Fancy seeing her here in Kimberley!"

Crossland did not reply. There was a far away look in his eyes; he was meditating deeply.

Sellon was a diamond broker. He was distinguished from most gentlemen of his profession by his reputation for integrity; there was not the faintest breath of a suspicion that he had been engaged in any illicit transaction, and those who came into possession of stolen diamonds would as soon have thought of taking them to the detectives as to Sellon.

Crossland was reputed to be a man of independent means, who came to South Africa for the benefit of his health during the winter. He was a pleasant and well-informed man, and Sellon, who had but few friends among Kimberley people, had taken to him. This was the second winter that Crossland had spent there, so that they were quite old friends.

"What is she doing here? Do you know?" asked Sellon.

"Yes. She was doing a little on the variety stage in England," was the reply. "She determined to come out here because she thought she could make some sort of a sensation that would help her on her return to London. I was introduced to her in the old country."

"So you know her, then? You must introduce me to her. I shall see whether she is the girl I——."

"You seem rather smitten," laughed Crossland.

Sellon flushed.

"She is a beautiful woman," he remarked as coolly as he could. "I suppose she has an engagement?"

"No. She came out on the chance. Risky, but she is a plucky girl. She came over in the same boat as I did. I believe she has been doing a little in Cape Town."

Sellon went home to his rooms that evening full of the lovely face of the woman he had seen pass in the carriage. He had been proof against the charms of the ladies in Kimberley and elsewhere, but it seemed as if he were about to capitulate unconditionally to a woman whom he scarcely knew. He sat in his chair for an hour without moving; his thoughts were fixed on the vision of loveliness that had floated past him. Then he aroused himself with a sheepish smile.

"Nonsense!" he muttered. "I am a fool to be so taken with a pretty face. And what do I want with a wife?" He paused. "It *is* lonely here, though," he added with a sigh.

The next morning he was punctual in keeping his appointment with Crossland, who at once conducted him to the hotel where Miss Lane was staying. To Sellon's delight, she recognised him at once and received him with such warmth that he was intoxicated with pleasure and love.

"I have often thought of you since that time, Mr. Sellon!" she exclaimed, "and have wondered whether I should ever see you again. I have wanted so much to thank you again for your bravery."

"Oh, it was nothing—nothing," stammered Sellon in confusion. "Do you really mean to say that you have remembered me all this time?"

"I can honestly say that not one day has passed without my thinking of your noble action," she replied, with a look that increased Sellon's confusion.

Crossland then joined in the conversation and contrived to turn it to other subjects. A few minutes later he declared hurriedly that he must leave them, and took his departure.

Sellon was glad of the opportunity of a *tête-à-tête* with Miss Lane, and when he left the hotel he was more infatuated than ever with the lovely artiste.

He called the next day and spent an hour with her; Crossland did not accompany him. It would have been impossible for Sellon to have given any idea of the conversation; he was now conscious that he was hopelessly in love with Alice, as he called her in his mind, and he cared for nothing else. He felt the soft touch of her hand upon his, he remembered the looks that had sunk deep into his heart, and the passionate longing to kiss the beautiful face that had been so close to his, was still with him.

For a week this went on. He saw her every day, and

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at last he determined to ask her to marry him. He had seen Crossland two or three times during the week, but it struck him that Crossland had wished to avoid him.

"Perhaps he is jealous of my conquest," thought Sellon. "I am sorry for him, if it is so, but——" He completed the sentence by a shrug of the shoulders.

There was a certain amount of nervousness, anxiety even, apparent in Miss Lane's demeanour as she received her lover that morning. Sellon noticed it, and as soon as they were seated on the couch he gently placed his arm round her waist and drew her head upon his shoulder.

"Alice—I must call you by that name, dear—what is it that makes you look so worried this morning? Confide all your troubles to me, little one, so that I may have the happiness of driving them away."

She nestled more closely to him and began to sob.

"Oh, Arthur, I am so unhappy!"

Sellon kissed her and tried to soothe her, but it was some time before he could persuade her to dry her eyes and tell him what troubled her.

"I am afraid of two men here, who have some evil designs against me," she said hesitatingly.

"Who are they?" demanded Sellon hotly.

"Don't get angry or you may make it worse for me," cried Alice. "One is a theatrical agent here and the other is—is—Mr. Crossland."

"Has Crossland dared—" began Sellon, jumping up and moving towards the door. She ran after him and pulled him back.

"You will spoil all," she exclaimed. "They are cunning, unscrupulous men—oh, that I had known it before! Listen," she continued hurriedly. "I cannot explain all, but I know there is only one way to escape them."

"And that is?"

"Someone must take me away," she answered, looking him straight in the eyes. "Someone must take me to Bloemfontein—quickly—to-night."

For a moment Sellon hesitated. He had come to offer her his hand, but an elopement or a runaway match had not entered his head. He caught the beseeching, bewitching glance of her piercing dark eyes, however, and all his scruples vanished.

"I came with the intention of asking you to be my wife, Alice. I will take you from here to-night, as you wish; and when we are out of Kimberley you shall explain it all to me. But why," he added, "do you wish to go to Bloemfontein?"

"Because it is a garden of flowers," she said softly, holding out her hands to him. "A path of flowers—will it not be symbolical of our future?"

"Yes, you are right, my darling," he whispered, pressing her to his breast. "I am too worldly; for me, Bloemfontein has hitherto been connected with diamond robberies—once in Bloemfontein, the thieves are safe. Forgive me for not remembering how pretty a place it is, and how natural that you should wish to go there to escape from your troubles."

He was about to kiss her again when they heard a gentle, but hasty knock at the door. Alice disengaged herself from her lover's embrace and went to the door. She opened it just a little and spoke to the person outside. A few sentences were rapidly exchanged in a low tone. Sellon could not see who it was, but he guessed from the voice that it was a coolie servant.

Alice closed the door and walked into the second room. She came out a moment later, holding a small package.

"How silly of him to interrupt," she cried playfully. "But you must go now, Arthur. And I want you to mind this packet for me." She hesitated a second, then continued: "Take care of it and do not fail to bring it with you this evening. Put it away in a pocket; where it will not be noticed—no, not in your breast pocket; it will

She came out a moment later, holding a small package.

bulge it out a little. Yes, that will do splendidly," she added as he placed it in one of his coat-tail pockets; "but be very careful of it."

He took her in his arms and kissed her passionately. A few whispered words passed between them, and she led him to the door.

"To-night, at nine o'clock, I will come for you," he said softly.

He opened the door; then started back in surprise. Two men, whom he recognised as detectives, had just reached it, and the foremost had raised his hand to knock. They entered without ceremony.

"What is the meaning of this visit, gentlemen?" he asked. All three men were looking away from Miss Lane, or they would have noticed the nervous twitching of her lips.

"We have authority to search these rooms, Mr. Sellon," replied the superior officer. "Mr. Crossland has been arrested for illicit dealing in diamonds. He has been watched and we have seen him enter this place to visit Miss Lane. We are trying to find the gems."

"We have authority to search these rooms."

"But you surely do not suspect this lady?" was all that Sellon could say. Crossland arrested! What did it mean?

"We have our orders, Mr. Sellon. You know we must obey."

Then the remembrance of the package flashed across Sellon's mind and a cold chill ran down his spine. Was it possible? Were Crossland and Alice accomplices? The low conversation with the coolie, the handing of the packet to him! Alice had been warned of the probable arrival of the detectives and had endeavoured to hurry him away with the stolen stones in order to save herself! But *could* it be so? His brain was in a whirl.

Then another horrible thought struck him. If the incriminating packet were discovered on his person! His good name would be gone and he would be ruined; it would not clear him if he made a clean breast of what he knew—suspicion would still rest upon him, even if his word were accepted for the main point—and then he would be giving *her* to certain imprisonment.

He wavered between love and duty; it was a trying ordeal. He cast a hesitating glance at Alice; she was looking at him with such a pleading expression that he was conquered. He would save her at any price! But could he elude the vigilance of the detectives in any way?

"Do you intend to submit me to the indignity of a search?" he asked haughtily.

"No, Mr. Sellon," replied the detective. "You are too well known to be suspected. We have no authority to do so, either. But we must search these rooms and—and we must ask Miss Lane to prove that she is not hiding them in her dress."

The young broker stifled a cry of relief, but now he hated himself! The detective's words cut him to the heart; he was above suspicion, yet he was aiding in the robbery!

The officers did their work, but found nothing. Sellon felt that he could not stay to talk to Alice; he remembered renewing his promise to call that evening in order to take her to Bloemfontein, but he recollected nothing of the walk home.

For the next few hours he suffered unspeakable mental anguish. Crossland was a thief; was Alice his accomplice? Had she not said that she was afraid of him? Did the package contain diamonds, after all? Had she not asked him to take her away before she had any knowledge of the arrest of Crossland and the arrival of the officers? He might have satisfied himself about the contents of the package by opening it, but his honourable nature repelled against this course, in spite of the events of the morning.

Gradually he grew calmer; and as his mind became more easy, his love for Alice assumed stronger hold upon him. No, he could not believe in her duplicity; it would be all right, she would explain it all! So, by the evening, he had become convinced that all was well. When we wish to see things in a certain light, we can soon bring ourselves to believe that they are as we desire them to be!

At nine o'clock punctually he was with her. He felt repaid for all he had done when she received him with that winning smile and raised her face, with a pretended pout on her rosy lips, for him to kiss.

It was not until they were bowling away in the trap and fairly within the territory of the Orange Free State that any reference was made to the incidents of the morning. Then he handed her the package.

"I have kept it safe for you," he said. "But it was a great risk. No, I did not open it."

She laughed softly.

"You have guessed what is in it?"

"Diamonds," he returned briefly. He did not care to talk on that subject; he wanted to forget it. He asked for no explanation; he desired, in his infatuation, to be oblivious of all save that she was his.

Suddenly she asked him to pull up.

"I think we passed something," she said. "It was like a huddled heap of humanity. Oh, do go back and see. I will stop here."

With a laugh at her anxiety, he sprang from the trap and retraced his steps. He had not gone very far, just round a bend in the road, when he heard a sound of a horse's hoofs. He hurried back to the bend. He saw the trap flying along and heard a mocking laugh.

He stood dumfounded. Then the truth forced itself upon him. He had been duped all along! She had pretended to be in love with him and had suggested the elopement with him for the sole purpose of using his reputation to enable her to get away from Kimberley, with her booty, in safety!

He did not attempt to follow her. He reviled himself for his infatuation and set his face towards Kimberley, to get back as best he could.

The following afternoon he saw Crossland in goal. He briefly stated what had passed and asked for an explanation. His pseudo friend, after some hesitation, gave him all the details of the scheme.

Crossland had carried out a number of transactions in diamonds and had escaped suspicion until within the last few days. When he discovered that he was watched he sent for Miss Lane, who was really his accomplice, to come from Bloemfontein to help him in a big deal of £20,000. It was his intention to pass the stones to her,

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so that she could take them away. There was some risk that she might be stopped, but they must take the chance.

At this point occurred the incident narrated at the commencement. This suggested the idea to Crossland. If Alice could contrive to fascinate Sellon, she could get away from Kimberley under the protection of his reputation; the fact that the broker fancied he recognised her was a trump card for the conspirators and we know how it was played. Their plans were precipitated; Crossland had an idea that the officers were becoming extra attentive, and it was resolved to get Alice away at once with the booty, which had just come into their possession. Hence the plan for the elopement.

"I tell you this," said Crossland coolly, "to set your mind at rest. I don't think you will split on me—if you do you must acknowledge your own complicity—and because—" He paused and a half-anxious look appeared on his countenance. "Hang it! I don't understand why she acted like that. It looks as if she intended to hoax us both and enjoy the proceeds with

Suddenly she asked him to pull up.

someone else! She is capable of it, I believe! I was relying upon your keeping her in view till I could arrive. They can't do anything to me here now that they have failed to find the stones."

Sellon left him in disgust. Crossland's theory proved correct; the duped diamond broker received a letter from from Miss Lane three days afterwards, in which she expressed her thanks for services rendered and begged him to inform Mr. Crossland that she and her friend Mr. Joyce, whom he would doubtless remember, would constantly think of him while they were enjoying the fruits of his biggest deal in diamonds.

Sellon has grown rich since then, and has had many a coy glance shot at him from a woman's eyes, but he is not likely to fall a victim to feminine charms again.

E. R. Kennen.

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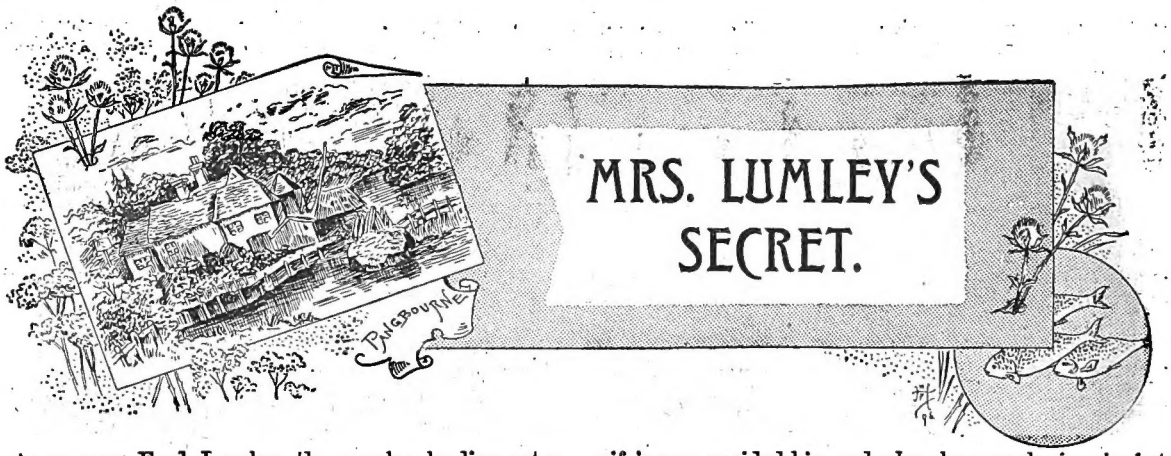

Although Fred Lumley, the popular leading actor of the "Kemble" Theatre, had been often heard to declare before marriage that there were men in the world who would marry the daughter of a Carribean savage providing she had £500 a year, he was not prepared to withdraw that statement even when Miss Emily Staples, the beautiful and accomplished niece of the wealthy Mr. Nicholas Staples, an enthusiastic patron of the drama, became his wife.

The young actor could safely affirm that his marriage had not been dictated by mercenary considerations, for although Mr. Staples, in giving his consent, had stipulated that he should be allowed to reside with the young couple on condition of his settling on his niece £500 a year, Fred, with that perception of character which seems peculiar to actors, would have declined his offer, had he not been afraid of losing Emily. He didn't like Mr. Staples, but he was very fond of Emily, so with a wry face he consented.

The lapse of five years left the young couple mutually satisfied with each other. Fred was ardently devoted to his profession, and as his services were much in request at matinées as well as at night, he and his wife did not often see much of each other, but they were always polite and affectionate when they did.

True, the fires lit by matrimony had nearly gone out, but the embers were glowing, showing that they had not yet arrived at that state when a stony embrace once a day is an indication that the domestic barometer is at fair. At the breakfast table Fred contemplated his wife's pretty face with a placid sense of pleasure, and when he left the house for rehearsals it was with the consciousness that the diadem of purity encircled her brow.

It was about this time that the actor's perceptive qualities—which, as we have said, were great—informed him that Uncle Nicholas had begun to eye him with a very mournful and sympathising expression, and, as Fred hated mysteries, he determined to have it out with the old gentleman, but all he could extract amounted to this: "Keep an eye on your wife, watch her, and if you think she is keeping anything from you, come to me. As my niece is the daughter of my dead brother, it behoves me to proceed in this matter with caution."

Fred pooh-poohed and pished a good deal during the delivery of this warning. It was not the first time Uncle Nicholas had been the cause of little "tiffs" between Emily and himself, but, try as he would, he found himself unable to resist following his advice. Slowly it dawned on him that Nicholas was right. His wife's eyes avoided his, and when he casually inquired at dinner one evening how she had spent the day, she stammered an inarticulate reply, and hastily left the room.

The next day, on returning from rehearsal, he happened to go into her boudoir without knocking. She was reading a letter. With cheeks aflame she tried to hide it. Fred saw nothing strange in her reading a letter, but why should a hot flush mantle her cheek as she declared the letter was from her sister? When Emily left the room her husband's eye lighted on an envelope in the grate, and he saw that it was addressed to his wife, and that the handwriting was that of a man, so he sought Nicholas again.

"I have come," he said. "My wife has a secret."

"I knew it," replied the old man with a malicious chuckle, which caused Fred to feel an inclination to strangle him. "It's a sad thing, a very sad thing."

"What's a very sad thing?" inquired the actor, a horrible fear gnawing his heart.

"Find out where your wife goes in the hansom cab which waits for her round the corner of the next street three and sometimes four times a week at 11.a.m."

Now, Fred did not think much of this; he was not naturally of a jealous disposition, and although he remembered the envelope he had found in the grate, there was no reason it should have any connection with journeys in a hansom cab at 11 a.m. Still, next morning, when his wife refused to accompany him to rehearsal, alleging as an excuse that her duties at home would occupy all the morning, he could not help peeping at her face over the top of the part he was studying. It gave him quite a shock.

He felt convinced she was deceiving him. So after pleading indisposition at rehearsal he hurried home, opened the door softly, slipped into his study unobserved and waited. A little later he heard a stealthy step descending the stairs, and opening the door slightly, saw his wife most elegantly dressed, quietly leaving the house.

The corner of the street was visible from the staircase window, but he found that occupied by the servants, who seemed as much interested in the doings of their mistress as Mr. Lumley was. The cook, who was a shocking example of the deteriorating effect of hard work on the female form, and whose stockings were not immaculate, was just confiding her opinions of married life to one of the housemaids, when she saw Mr. Lumley and fled, followed by the others, allowing their master to

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reach the window in time to see his wife step into a hansom and drive off. Before he left the window he was joined by Uncle Nicholas, who drew his attention to the alertness which characterised the neighbourhood that morning. There were heads at every window, and from the signalling, pointing, and smiling, it seemed as if the watchers had very definite views on the matter, if he hadn't. Where had his wife gone to in the hansom, and how dare she keep these journeys a secret from him? She was his wife. What did it all mean?

Mr. Lumley took advantage of his wife's absence to institute a minute search in her boudoir and dressing-room, and an icy terror crept into his heart when he saw his wretched old relation pounce on a letter hidden at the back of a drawer in the dressing-table. It was only a fragment, but it was in the same handwriting as the envelope he had found in the grate, and ran as follows:

"As my brother who is staying with me knows your husband, we must be very careful. I shall expect you to-morrow morning. Be at the side entrance at 11.30. I will be on the watch, and will let you in unobserved."

He read the letter again and again, and tried to imagine a case where a married lady found it necessary, for some good and praiseworthy object, to be smuggled into the house of a gentleman at 11 30 a.m. unknown to her husband. He tried but failed, and, leaden winged, the effort to believe her innocent fluttered to the ground.

That evening Mr. Lumley dined at his club, and for the first time in his life took too much wine. The most poignant griefs are apt to fade when contemplated through vinous and alcholic mists, but the next morning after he had asked his wife to meet him after rehearsal to go to the Royal Academy, and she had refused, saying she had "some shopping to do," he looked quite ten years older as he stepped into the cab which Uncle Nicholas had secured to follow Mrs. Lumley. Sorrow is an unsparing sculptor, and horrible suspicion will mar the smoothness of the noblest brow.

The features of the unhappy actor twitched with passion, and from the way he wriggled in his seat it seemed to his relative—who, never having been married himself, regarded his companion with a sort of "tired sneer"—that a veritable tempest of jealousy was rushing up and down him, north, south, east, and west. Uncle Nicholas had to endure something more than the proverbial "bad quarter of an hour" that morning.

"This is all your confounded work!" exclaimed the actor, turning on the old gentleman with a look appalling in its ferocity.

"My dear boy, the sacred instincts of truth would not permit me to remain silent."

"Indeed!" was the withering reply. "Not even to preserve the reputation of your niece?"

"Truth should be paramount to all consideration," said the old gentleman uneasily.

"The truth!" roared Fred, so loudly that it is a wonder his wife did not hear him. "The truth is only estimable when spoken in a righteous cause. If it is true that truth lies at the bottom of a well, I tell you to your face that I wish you had drowned yourself when you went down to seek it!"

Fred's spirits rose as the cab drove on. Her destination might be Regent Street and shopping after all. Yes, there was still a ray of hope, a thin, half-starved ray if you like, but the actor clung to it and basked and revelled in its meagre warmth, till the cab containing Emily left Regent Street and made straight for St. John's Wood, when he sank back on his seat with a low groan. When Emily's cab drew up at a small villa in Alpha Grove, Fred and his companion hurriedly alighted, and hiding behind their vehicle, watched the movements of the guilty woman. Looking furtively round, Mrs. Lumley drew down her veil, and cautiously approaching the side entrance, knocked.

A young gentleman presently opened the door, and motioning her to silence, drew her inside, closing it again. A young gentleman, and a handsome one, too. Who was the serpent who had crept into his paradise?

"Come away," whispered Nicholas, "depraved hussy!"

"Come away," cried Fred hoarsely, "when my wife is in that house with a man whose features, when he opened the door, anyone could see were distinctly affectionate? Come away? Never!" and shaking off his companion's grasp, he went up the steps, and giving a couple of loud knocks in imitation of a postman's summons soon found himself inside the house.

Slipping a sovereign into the astonished domestic's hand, he asked where the lady was who had just entered.

"What lady, sir?"

"Well, where's your master!"

"Upstairs, sir, in that room."

Accompanied by Uncle Nicholas Fred stole upstairs. They reached the door, stopped and listened. They heard voices. One was Emily's, the other a gentleman's.

"I think I shall have another try at your mouth, you closed it too firmly yesterday."

The airy gusto with which the gentleman announced this intention completely upset the actor's self-command. The next moment he was in the room, looking uncommonly foolish too, when he found that his wife was having her portrait painted by that rising young artist, Bucklaw, and that the work was being prepared in secret, as Emily intended the picture as a birthday surprise for her husband.

Fred seized a favourable opportunity that evening and replaced the letter which had so upset his peace of mind in the drawer of the dressing-table, and swore he would kick Uncle Nicholas out of the house if he breathed a word of what had taken place. Emily appeared perfectly satisfied with her husband's masterly explanation, that "he happened to be passing through Alpha Grove as Emily entered Bucklaw's studio," but for all that she discharged the cook the next day, and made matters so very uncomfortable for Uncle Nicholas that he soon left the house exclaiming with hardened jocosity:

"Emily, my presence in your husband's house, and the occasional domestic breezes I have caused, have given crisp ripples to the waters of your domestic life. I leave you now to the utter stagnation of contentment. Good-bye."

ARTHUR GOODRICH.

RESULT OF "BOOK" COMPETITION FOR WEEK ENDING APRIL 16th.

Miss C. Hart, 21 King's Road, Brownswood Park, N. "Tennyson's Poems."

W. H. Procter, School Board Offices, Congleton. "The Zone of Fire." By Headon Hill.

Thomas Boddy, Heighington R.S.O., County Durham. "Exercise for Health."

G. Jones, 26 Yorkington Street, Stockport. "The Christian." By Hall Caine

Jack Hazeldene, Middle Class Schools, Sheffield. "Huxley's Physiology."

W. H. Westlake, 2 Rownham Place, Clifton, Bristol. "Strength." By Sandow.

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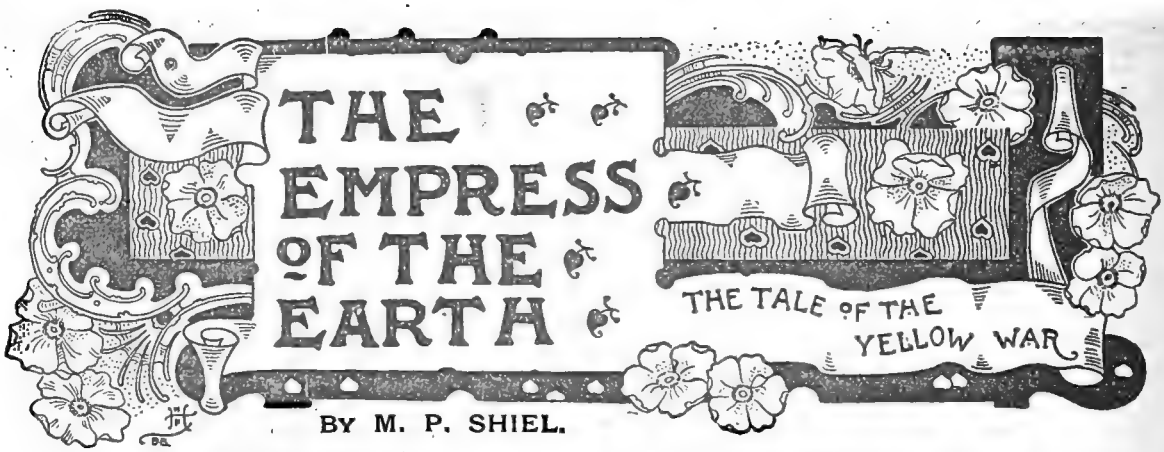

BY M. P. SHIEL.

CHAPTER XXV.

Before the Battle.

During all that afternoon and night England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland uttered its voice.

For on the 6th of August the usual 5,000,000 letters and post-cards delivered by the Post-office leapt up to 14,500,000. This meant that the whole nation had taken busily to pen-and-ink, to paper and card-board. It meant that it was profoundly stirred about something, that it wanted something with its whole heart.

All these extra millions of letters were directed to London, some to the Government offices, the majority to the London daily papers. Not a thousandth part of them were ever opened. The Circulation Office of the London Postal Service Department was kept in a flurry of business all through the night. St. Martin's in the morning got postmen where it could; and the bags of the carriers bulged.

When any vast collection of animals acts in this spontaneous way, all doing the same thing, it is that they are stirred by some instinct which is in unison with the Soul of the world. The Universal Voice is, in truth, the voice of God. Democracy is thus a kind of Holy Scripture. Its Will is the Decalogue.

The nation, having eagerly drunk the news that John Hardy had suddenly reappeared in England as mysteriously as he had disappeared from it, demanded his presence at the impending battle. It insisted that no nonsense about formality or convention should deprive it of his possible help. Most of the people demanded his appointment as Admiral of the Fleet.

And why? He had only been instrumental in winning a single battle for England. If they had reasoned, their ardour of persuasion could not have been so intense. But the fact is, that their cry proceeded only from that divine instinct for truth which, in hours of extremity, often inspires nations, and sometimes individuals. That Hardy was the right man, just then, just there, they felt intuitively; and they did not mince matters in proclaiming it.

The *Daily Mail* sent a telegram to Mr. Gladstone at Hawarden, to ask his opinion. The reply was characteristic of the aged statesman. He wired:

"Am not specially qualified to judge, but agree *in the main* with the nation."

The only person in Europe to whom the coming battle, or his own possible share in it, did not seem of direct momentous importance, was Hardy.

For the immediate motive of the Allies in invading England was to compel the withdrawal of the British troops from the Continent; but even supposing they effected a landing, there was an enemy impending upon them, as Hardy knew, far more terrible than all the combined armies of several Europes; and this enemy would at once compel them to do the very thing they sought to force upon Britain.

And it was near—it was not far off. As he stepped into the train at Worthing that night for his journey to London, he bought a paper; and in a small-type paragraph, unmarked perhaps but by him, he saw this quaint item of news:

"A train containing 500 Chinese has arrived at Petersburg from Vladivostok. They seem poor, and the object of their journey is unknown. It is the intention of the Russian authorities to send them back to their own country."

Hardy muttered to himself:

"So soon, Yen How?"

But in the eyes of England, of Britain, of Europe, the coming battle was the Greater Waterloo of world-history; the final shock of this annihilating war; the crowning Armageddon before a probable thousand years of Peace.

If Britain failed now, she failed; and if Europe, then Europe failed, too. There could be little further struggle: for who would be there to make it? There would be no fight left in the limp nations.

Hardy reached London at eleven p.m. It was partly expecting him, for as soon as the two Worthing reporters had got off their news, Worthing had pricked its ears and heard. Dixon's became the centre of the town, and a moving crowd surveyed the house for hours. Long before Hardy appeared all his immediate plans were known from Dixon; he was then cheered by the full street; only those near enough to see him well being mostly silent, impressed with something of that strangeness of expression which made the sailors at Kiao-chau whisper: "What a face!"

London, therefore, expected him, without certainty as to the hour of his arrival. A considerable crowd waited at Victoria; but when at last it saw him, it made no sign. They looked for a very young man, with swift glance and free air. They saw a man with stooping shoulders and grey in his long hair; and decided that this was hardly he.

But one pair of eyes knew him under his disguise. Old Bobbie Mason had been waiting all the evening at the station, wondering why his boy had forgotten him, had sent him no line or word. When at last he saw, he started with horror; but he knew his own.

Outside, instead of the crowd of busy cabs, Hardy saw a meagre muster of five or six; and his musing eye noted the raw-boned look of the horses. As his carriage passed through Buckingham Palace Road, a baked-potato apparatus stood just in front of the Palace, and he noted with a pang the largeness of the crowd round it. The streets were almost deserted. Even the policemen seemed fewer. In a bye-street near Oxford Circus, an old woman walked

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and behind her a cat, with little halts and runs, followed persistently, sending out piteous feeble cries to the night.

Old Bobbie, sitting there by his side, waited for a caress of the once affectionate hand. But no caress came. They drove onward in absolute silence. The only words which John had spoken were the two: "Well, Bobbie," at the station-platform. The old man was frightened.

Once only, as John was moving off to bed, the old butler broke out; and he cried, with clasped hand:

"Master John—what—what—have they done to you!"

And John answered:

"They have tortured me to death, Bobbie, if you want to know."

And that was all. The rose-leaf lips were pressed pretty tight now.

Early in the morning the Government knew what it had to do, if it meant to keep its place. In a thousand startling ways it learnt that the nation's will, this time, had got to be done.

But the thing was officially impossible. John Hardy was nobody, officially. The ships' crews were complete; and it was anticipated that the main portion of the fleet still at anchor would sail at noon. The Government could not exactly telegraph to a Captain or a Vice-Admiral, and say: "You must give up your place to John Hardy, because he is a better man than you." They were absolutely at their wits' end.

But the chief characteristic of the British race is its nimble way. It actually does manage in the end. At nine o'clock Captain MacLeod, once of the *Jupiter*, now of the *Royal Sovereign*, was seized by "a sudden illness"; at half-past nine, Admiral Sir Nowell Salmon, principal Naval Aide-de-Camp to the Queen, was at 11A Cavendish Square; at ten, Lord Charles Beresford, upon whom, in the hour of peril, the supreme command had been imposed, telegraphed to the Committee of National Safety, and also to the Admiralty, offering to Hardy a joint command of the squadron: at half-past ten Hardy was hasting in a special train toward Portsmouth.

An old woman walked, and behind her a cat.

But he went under compulsion, not knowing why. He had no theory of naval war. He had, indeed, won a battle, but—he shrank a little from this prominence. The truth was, he was more or less unconscious of the clearness of his own eyes, and the valour of his own heart. It needed that the actual hard facts of a situation should be before him before he could assume the aggressiveness and the self-assurance of the hero.

When on the point of setting out from Cavendish Square, he had cut out from the newspaper bought at Worthing the paragraph about the 500 Chinese. And he had written the two following letters, the first to Mr. Goschen at his private address:

DEAR SIR,—I am just about to set out to fight in the battle which you kindly allow me to attend. In case I should get killed, I am writing this letter to ask you if you will kindly send a ship, flying the English White Ensign at her mast-head, under that the Blue Peter, and under that the Union Jack, to the island of Monte Christo, with orders to bring home what she will find there. I believe you will find that this will come in useful to you in a few weeks' time.

I am, sir,
Your obdt. servant,
JOHN HARDY.

The second letter was to Lord Salisbury. It ran:

MY LORD,—I take the liberty to inclose you a slip from a newspaper about some Chinamen who have come to Petersburg, because I believe it is well worth your attention. In my opinion, within three or four weeks from now there will be some four hundred millions of yellow men in Europe, and perhaps in England, too. I have just come from China myself, so I ought to know what I am saying. A very great man, named Yen How, is the cause of all this. In my opinion, the very best thing England could do would be to withdraw at once from the Continent the armies she has there.

I am, my Lord,
Your obdt. servant,
JOHN HARDY.

If ever man was shocked with fright, or started at the keen spur of terror, it was the Prime Minister on reading this note.

Now he understood some things which had puzzled him.

News had reached England that three American cruisers in Chinese waters had mysteriously ceased to report themselves. Later had come the news that no intelligence could be obtained of some Italian and Austrian ships of war sent out to China during the "Eastern craze." Merchant ships from Europe had sailed round the Cape to the far East, and their long-delayed return was still awaited. It was known that China and Europe were telegraphically disconnected.

These things, at another time, might have given to Europe some faint hint of the actual facts. But during the preoccupation of the war, not the remotest inkling of the truth occurred to anyone. China was a forgotten land. The result of the great naval battle in the Hwang-hai was still unknown in England—all was unknown. John Hardy was the first messenger from that silent, but busy Eastern world, who had appeared for many a month.

At the quay a boat awaited him. He was taken on board the *Anson*, which carried the Admiral's flag at the main, and was received by Lord Charles Beresford in his private cabin.

The cheery sailor took the hand of the grave-faced one, and said:

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"They have tortured me to death, Bobbie, if you want to know."

"I congratulate you most heartily, Mr. Hardy, on the merited enthusiasm and confidence which you have aroused in your countrymen, and I shall feel myself honoured by your collaboration."

And Hardy said:

"Thank you, my lord."

And, after some few words, they sat together, and Beresford said:

"The facts, since you are ignorant of them, are roughly these: The navy of Italy is practically intact. Of her twelve first-class battleships, two were sunk by Riviera forts, but about 130,000 tons of her 150,000 odd tons in this line remain, with say 44 guns over 13 inches, and counting the whole fleet, 16 over 10. With the names, tonnage, and armaments of the various ships you are doubtless familiar, the two lost ships being the *Re Umberto*, and the *Rugiero di Lauria*. France, on the other hand, has lost heavily in the war; her Toulon squadron of some eighteen armoured ships, which she had imprudently reduced by the four sent to take part in the first invasion of England, was practically annihilated in the Bay of Algesiras, during an attempt to pass through the Straits. A few antiquated wooden things like the *Colbert* and the *Suffren*, as well as that rather lame duck, the *Richelieu*, still remain.

"Her Levant squadron, however, is mostly good for fight; there was a brush with our East Mediterranean force, but the French turned tail, and were lost in a mist after some mutual injuries. The majority of the fifteen coast-defence iron-clads, moreover, are intact, and I have no doubt will be dragged into this final effort. Altogether we have, I think, to reckon with a contribution from France of, say, 96,000 tons, and this will include, I think I may say, the *Brennus*, the *Sfax*, the *Trident*, the two three-masted *contre-torpilleurs*, *Voutour* and *Cosmao*, the *Amiral Duperré*, the *Levrier*, the cruiser *Troude*, the *Marceau*, and the *Magenta*. Those, I think, are all I can be sure of. In the Baltic there have been four battles, one British-German, one British-Russian-German, one Swedish-German, and the last Swedish-Russian. On the state of affairs with regard to Baltic ships I am unfortunately not so well informed.

"I very much doubt if there remains to Sweden a single effective ship of war; but, if I am not wrong, we may expect to have to do with a contribution from Russia and Germany combined of say, 100,000 tons, one half of which, I calculate, will be battle-ship weight, and the rest cruisers and torpedo flotillas. Austria will send her single battle-ship and her 32,000 ton weight in cruisers, making altogether, with torpedo-boats, say 40,000 tons. Putting all these together, I have calculated, Mr. Hardy, an opposition of 456,000 tons.

"Very well, now. Let us turn nearer home, and see what force we have to oppose to this great armada. Britain, I assure you, has had a hard and up-hill fight of it. There lie around you ships recalled from every quarter of the globe, except China, where, I hear that you say, our squadron has gone to Davy Jones. If an invading army were to descend from, let us say, the planet Jupiter, they would find all our colonies undefended. Happily our enemies are in the same plight. Altogether we have at our command, including available coast-defence ships, 156,000 tons, just about one-third of the enemy's force; and if these figures do not fill you with a certain gravity, it is because you are a Briton and Mr. Hardy."

Beresford smiled as he concluded, leaning back in his chair; Hardy, looking upon the ground, did not smile.

After a minute Hardy said:

"I take it, my lord, that after this battle, there won't be any ships of war left anywhere?"

"There will be the Japanese, Chinese, and American navies," said Beresford, "and some things known as the *Marina Espagñola*, with some inconsiderable Portuguese and Dutch ships. Europe will then have to fight with her Atlantic greyhounds."

Still Hardy did not smile.

"And what are our best ships, my lord?" he said.

"Our best ships are good," replied Lord Charles Beresford. "We have the *Illustrious*, the *Hood*, the *Anson*, the *Trafalgar*, the *Royal Sovereign*, on board of which you will bear the joint direction of the battle, though I am sorry to say without a Flag Captain—also the *Centurion*, the *Nile*, the *Benbow*, the *Hero*. You will see in a few minutes for yourself. Not all the most modern of the modern, perhaps—but all good ships and true."

"There won't be much of them left after the battle, my lord," remarked Hardy.

This was obvious. Lord Beresford coughed. And he said:

"I suppose not. But now—the case being as I have explained to you, what are your ideas as to a plan of battle, and so on?"

For some time Hardy was silent, perusing the ground. Afterwards, he said:

"To be candid, my lord, I have no idea, not a single one. Or rather, I have *One*."

"Very good, Mr. Hardy; let me hear it, and we will then confer together upon it."

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"My idea is this, sir," said Hardy, "to ask you to let me take a cruiser, or a pinnace, and go to the foreign fleet with a flag of truce to try and persuade them, by hook or by crook, to go back again to their own country."

"My good Mr. Hardy!" broke from Lord Charles' lips.

"You are astonished, my lord," said Hardy. "You guess that I am as fond of a fight as anyone, and you did not quite expect to hear that sort of proposal from me. But I make it seriously to you, and in doing so, I forget my own inclination, and even I forget the glory of England. I am thinking of the good of the whole world. The fact is, sir, I happen to know more of the actual conditions of the present and the near future than you do, and therefore see things in different proportions. I say to you, Lord Beresford, that mankind is at this moment in by far the greatest fix in which it has ever been since the first man stepped; and how it is going to get out of it, God only knows. You think you have been having a great war in Europe, and so you have.

"But this little great war of yours is not anything compared with what is coming upon you, sir. Believe me, for I know, or I would not say it. It has been man warring with man all the time, has it not? But how if all the devils in Hades, myriads of them, my lord, suddenly break loose upon you?

"It would be an easy thing for four millions of yellow men, with a proper leader, to conquer Europe in its present state. But it is not four millions which are coming; it is four hundred millions; and every single one of them a devil, as I say, vomited from below. I have just come from China; and that is what I have to tell you, sir."

As Hardy ceased, he lifted his hitherto careless eyes, and now there was a flash in them; in the face of the other was horror, query, incredulity.

There was a dead silence. Lord Beresford had of old been himself one of the preachers of "The Yellow Danger;" but he had preached it as a theory, afar off. When he was told that it was here—had come — it shocked and appalled him as though he had never once heard of such a thing.

In the midst of the silence, there was a knock, and the Admiral's Flag-Lieutenant entered the room. He said:

"The *Indefatigable* has steamed into harbour, sir, and signals that the enemy are now passing through the Straits."

A chain of four British cruisers, going and coming within signalling distance of one another, the remotest keeping watch upon the movements of the enemy, the nearest in touch with Portsmouth, had been told off for this duty two days previously.

"We must be looking alive, then," said Lord Beresford. "The words you have spoken, Mr. Hardy, are terrible; and the course you suggest seems to me one almost requiring the authority of the civil powers. But now, you see, there is no time. I suppose I must take upon myself the responsibility of acceding to your views."

"I believe that England will approve our conduct, sir."

"Good. At the same time I can't say that I have much faith in the success of your expedition."

"I *hope* it will succeed, my lord. If it does not——"

"Well?"

"Then it will serve another end."

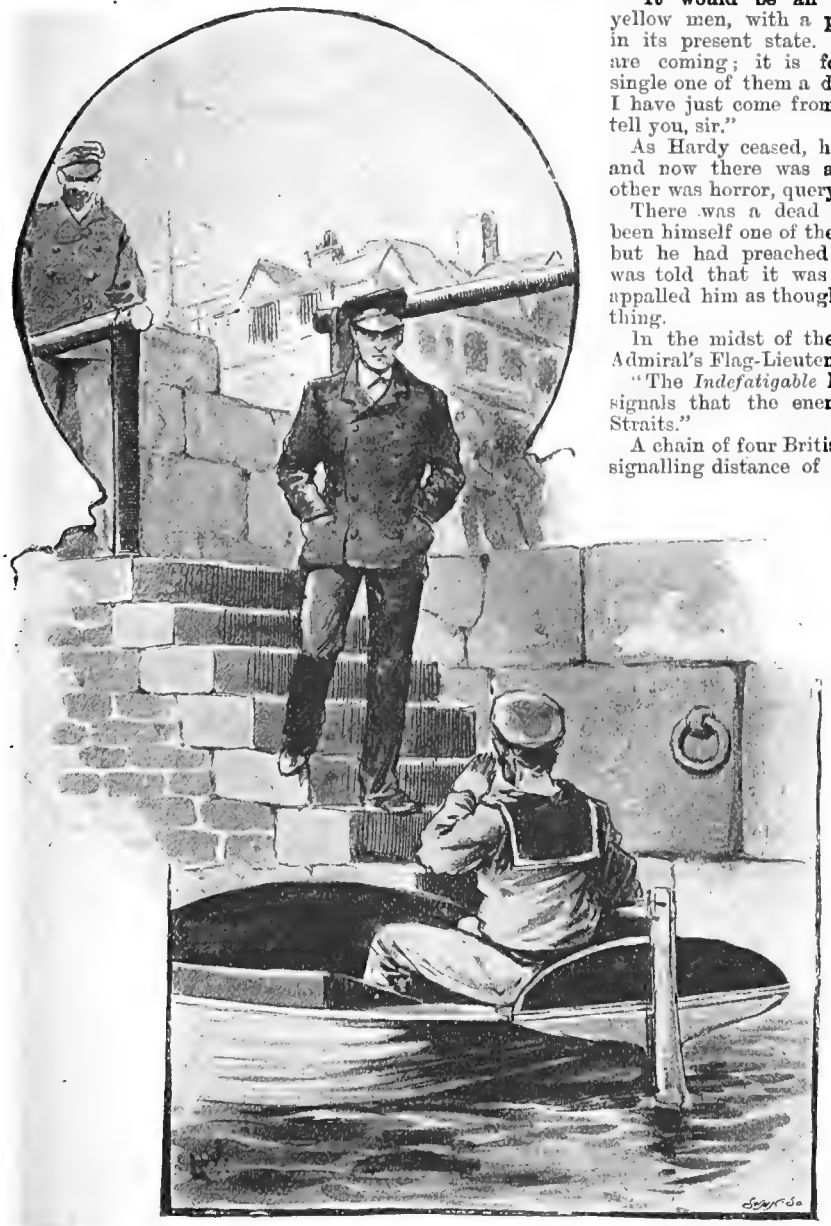
"What end?"

"I shall have a good look at the enemy's formation, forces, and disposition."

And at these words the eyes of the two men met.

And Lord Charles Beresford smiled.

And John Hardy, for the first time, smiled.



He was taken on board the Anson.

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CHAPTER XXVI.

The Greater Waterloo.

The ships lay in harbour with fires banked and steam at a quarter of an hour's notice.

The single signal "Weigh!" went up from the *Anson*, and ten thousand sailor-hearts went fluttering with awe as the fat chain-links, like processions of slow-footed sea-tortoises, came waddling clumsily in-board.

It was arranged between Hardy and Beresford that the plan of advance which the latter had long since determined upon should be put into execution and maintained, up to the time of Hardy's visit to the Allied fleet. If, after the visit, Hardy wished to take over the sole command, he would signal that fact throughout the fleet.

At noon exactly the ships steamed out. At once the news was flashed over all Britain, and an hour later the churches of the land, in village, town, and city, were thronged with worshippers, imploring the Almighty to protect His Witness in the earth, and not to forsake in the hour of her extremity that chosen Nation, His Servant, which had proclaimed the greatness of goodness, and, as far as her poor striving eyes could see, had loved Righteousness, and had hated Iniquity.

The ships passed Spithead massed in four columns in line ahead, flag and senior officers leading their columns, Hardy at the head of the starboard line in the *Royal Sovereign*, and Beresford at the head of the extreme port. Ships had stringent instructions to keep their speed, and maintain an exact formation. Six knots, eight knots, ten knots were signalled; and it was evident from the position of the steam cones that every ship had steam in plenty.

It was a bright early September day; but as often happens on such days, a bluish mist, which was half a mist, and half a luminosity, delicately veiled the distance.

Off Selsey Bill the second link of the chain of look-outs joined the fleet, an hour afterwards the third, and half an hour afterwards the fourth. The last, having come in at the rate of twenty-one knots, reported the enemy off Winchelsea, steering W. by S. in four lines abreast, the last line consisting mainly of troopships, and the whole occupying a vast breadth of sea midway between the French coast at Dieppe and the English at Winchelsea. In half-an-hour everybody of any rank in either fleet had a glass at his eyes.

It was the head signalman of the *Royal Sovereign* who first sent a thrill through his ship by reporting that he could make out something to eastward; and five minutes later every glass could detect the enemy, faint and toy-like in the vague haze as mirage, or the other-world hues of soap-bubbles. The fleets were then twenty miles apart, and it was just after four, the day being as bright and hot as ever.

John Hardy, the glass at his eyes, said to a signal midshipman, an old *Britannia* ship-mate of his own age:

"I want No. 98. Have her signalled alongside at once."

No. 98 was a quite new first-class torpedo-boat, the fastest thing in the British navy, and the first of her build. Only 130 tons in displacement, she yet had a length of 160 feet, and an I.H.P. of 2,800. She steamed, or rushed, at the rate of 27 knots, and while she was doing it, her crew were not comfortable, and the sea in all her neighbourhood changed colour. John Hardy, before he stepped aboard her, took the precaution to drape himself from head to foot in oil-skins.

Away, then, in a few minutes, drove No. 98 at full speed, swaying in a horrible vibratory heave of her flanks, like a charger who has galloped all day, and at night-fall he sprawls with drooped neck at the inn-gate, the sweat reeking on his rocking ribs; so drove No. 98, groaning for speed, seeming far too frail for the power that pumped and travailed within her rocking ribs.

Eastward she flew, a mere white spectre of hurrying foam; and within this shroud of spray, Hardy in his oilskins lay flat on his face, his left arm round an upright at the extreme bow, a double spy-glass at his eyes. From the mast-head amidships floated a large white flag.

As soon as No. 98 was seen to shoot ahead of the fleet, Lord Beresford signalled slow speed, and the fleet proceeded at a mere crawl through the water, this having been previously agreed upon. It was Hardy's idea that the enemy were probably ignorant of our exact forces, and that something might possibly be gained, when the facts of the battle unfolded themselves, by keeping them in this ignorance as long as might be. Hence a nearer approach was for the present avoided.

In thirty-five minutes Hardy was on the deck of the Allied Admiral's ship, the ship being the *Andrea Doria*, and the Admiral, in virtue of seniority, Admiral Prémesnil, the Grand Duke Alexis being second in command.

He was led, his face half enveloped in the throat-flap of the oil-skin, and the water streaming to his feet, into the Admiral's quarters. Prémesnil, a tall man, with grey hair, and a stately courteousness of manner, sat opposite to Hardy, supporting a thoughtful brow on thumb and finger.

"May I ask, sir," said Hardy, "are you fairly well acquainted with English?"

"Fairly well, sir," answered Prémesnil; "and that is not a confession, but a boast."

He bowed. Hardy bowed.

"Well, sir," said Hardy, "I come to you to make a proposal of peace. But before I can say anything, I must ask you to slacken your speed, so as not to approach too near to my fleet during our talk. Our fleet is almost stationary. I ask the same of you."

"It shall be done, sir. But first let us understand who we are. I, as you guess, am the Admiral-in-Chief here Admiral Prémesnil. Who are you?"

"I have the joint-command of the British fleet," said Hardy, "in collaboration with Lord Charles Beresford. My name is John Hardy. I speak for myself and my colleague."

"Might I ask—Hardy of Shoreham fame?"

"Yes, sir."

"Good. Then I shall at once comply with your request as to speed, and order you a glass of wine. You have had a good drenching, I see."

The Admiral touched a button, and gave an order to an officer as to speed. But Hardy declined the wine.

He put his brow on his hand, and he began to talk slowly and gravely in his plain, strong Saxon, unfolding to the Admiral why he was there, going into the minutiæ of the Chinese character, prophesying in simple English, but with the conviction and effusion of a Hebrew Seer, the doom of Europe.

He spoke for half-an-hour without interruption. And when he was finished, the Admiral sighed, for he was weary, and he was wondering what all this was about, and when it would end. He did not believe a word of the matter.

The thought occurred to him: "Can this be a ruse to keep back the battle till darkness comes on?"

His manner stiffened. He was hopelessly narrow and technical; he lacked both sight and insight.

"And what are your proposals, sir?" he said.

"I have made them!" said Hardy.

"But not seriously—come now."

Hardy leapt to his feet, flushing.

"Do you reject them, then?"

"In my own name, and in the name of my colleagues, without consulting them, most decidedly—yes."

"Then, sir, we will fight you."

"Since nothing else remains, Mr. Hardy."

"I say you *bonjour*, monsieur."

"Good day, Mr. Hardy."

They bowed. Hardy passed through the door, his brow very pink, the Admiral following.

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Again they bowed as Hardy passed down the ship's side; and never met again.

Back tore No. 98 to her own fleet, Hardy lying at her stern with the glass held steadily to his musing eyes.

To the surprise of the fleet, the torpedo-boat, instead of returning to the starboard column, made for the extreme port, steering for the *Anson*.

At this time Hardy, stung by the French Admiral, and excited at the near approach of battle, was flushed in face, and about him was something of his natural look of youth. His blood was up. He had come into contact with the realities of the case—the very realities to which his own inner nature was akin. Here he was at home, among familiar things, which he could manipulate without fail. His nature, as it were, rose and buckled on its sword, feeling

His face half enveloped in the throat-flap of the oilskin.

its force, not doubting its dowry. He was prepared now for any responsibility. His soul recognised and acknowledged itself, and his eyes were bright. He was a Hero.

As other men discover theories and apply them to facts, so he, on contact with facts, evolved theories. He had formed a plan of the battle.

He ran up to the *Anson's* side with alacrity. And as he was hurriedly met by Lord Beresford, he hurriedly said:

"These people will have nothing to do with peace, my lord. The thing now is to beat them."

"I heartily agree, Mr. Hardy. Am I to understand that, having seen their disposition, you are prepared to take over the sole command?"

"I am willing, my lord."

"Good! And have you come to tell me that?"

"No. I came to save you a journey to my ship, as I was already abroad from mine. What I want is a meeting of all captains and commanders in your ward-room at once. But it must be at once."

Beresford instantly turned, and sent a middy packing with the order; the flags climbed up, and a flotilla of forty-three hurried boats came converging over a wide space of sea.

They were soon all on board, and gathered in the ward-room. Beresford, half-rising from his chair, said: "Mr. Hardy will speak on my behalf and on his own, gentlemen," and sat down again.

Every one of those assembled eyes rested critically upon Hardy as he rose, he in his wet oil-skins, they all in uniform, prepared to pass judgment upon him as seaman, as general, as man.

Would he not hesitate, or blush, or strut, or stammer? Would he not show himself blatant, or timorous, or crude, or uninitiated?

They none of them felt absolutely sure of him. Only Hardy felt absolutely sure of himself, standing on fact. He rose with the self-assurance and the self-unconsciousness of Cromwell, four-square to his place and his hour.

This is what he said:

"We have not much time for talk, gentlemen, as the enemy must now be approaching us at the rate of eight or ten knots, and I do not want them to come too near before I tell you what I think. Lord Charles Beresford has calculated that they outnumber us by three to one, and that is just about the truth. Now, I am not at all sure that you will all absolutely agree with what I am going to say about that; but, personally, I am quite certain of my ground. They are three, I say, and we are one. Well, suppose three men attack me in the street, what would be the best thing, and what would be the worst, which I could do? The best thing I could do would be to set my back against a wall, face them, and try to drive away at them; the worst thing, would be to get in the middle of a triangle formed by them. We agree, of course, as to that; and hence the horror which all military people have of the phrase: 'between two fires.'

"But surely, gentlemen, with a ship it is different! On land you must not be too bold, for then you become rash; but on board a ship, I give it as my opinion, that the rasher you are, the better the chance you have! *Why*, let me ask you, ought I to try to get my back against a wall, if three men attack me in the street? There is no other reason than this: that I have only got one face and two hands. If I had three faces, and six hands, the best thing I could do would be to get in the middle of them, and try to finish them all off, before any two could attack me in one quarter.

"Now, a ship has four faces—a bow, a stern, and two sides—and under each of these a gallant number of hands. I believe now, whatever the books on naval tactics may say, that you will be on my side in this matter, for one, of course, must not go by books, where so much is at stake.

"But I do wish to convince you quite fully. Let me point out to you, then, that the modern battle-ship, as distinct from the old-time ones, is a far more potent thing as an attacking than as a self-defensive machine. The *Camperdown* rammed the *Victoria* as they were playing about together, and down, with hardly a sigh, went the *Victoria*, like lead. If you were to armour a battle-ship to resist the attack of a 111-ton gun, that ship would sink without troubling anyone to fire the gun off. And what does this prove? It proves that if three ships attack one, the best thing which that one can do is to to turn three faces simultaneously to those three ships, and batter away at them with her hundred hands, making sure that, not one, but four, ships will have disappeared when the smoke clears. In other words, the one ship must get in the middle of the three. It is a question of Time.

"Of course, gentlemen, if a ship could float with only one side, then it would be of great importance for her to avoid getting 'between two fires.' But when one side is broken,

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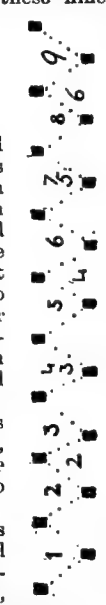
both sides sink, and it is of no consequence whether or not the other side is broken, too; while it *is* of consequence that that other side should, before it sinks, be sinking an enemy's ship. It is a question of Time.

"I hope I make myself clear. I am led to express these thoughts to you, because they have just been passing most vividly through my own head; and they have been doing so in consequence of the sight I have had of the enemy's fleet.

"The arrangement of that fleet you already partly know. The important point is this: that their first and second lines abreast consist of two rows of battle-ships, the first numbering ten, and the second nine. Now these are arranged in echelon; so that you get a series of nine triangles with their bases toward us, and their apex away from us, as you see in this drawing which I have made, marking the names of ships as far as I could determine, or guess, them."

A paper roughly marked with a diagram like the following was handed round:

"Now, gentlemen, since we have just nine battle-ships, we have it in our power to make a dash into these nine triangles, and fire away; but in that case, every second Allied battle-ship in the front line would be attacked by two, instead of one British ship; and we really have not the material to spare for these luxuries. No: what I propose is that we spread ourselves out, so that six of our battle-ships shall occupy the whole length of the French line abreast; and in that case, as the diagram shows us, our extreme starboard ship will find herself running into a foreign triangle, base facing; our second ship into a quite distinct foreign triangle, apex facing; our third ship into a third foreign triangle, base facing; and so, for the six ships, base facing, and apex facing, alternately. Thus our six ships will engage eighteen distinct foreign ships; and the foreigners will have one ship left; and we shall have—three.



"Now, that one left ship of the foreigners I wish to have attacked by torpedo-boats No. 47, No. 53, and No. 98 at the same moment, the instant the battle commences. They are to do nothing else till that one ship is in the air.

"Well, with regard to our three battle-ships left, it is chiefly to tell you what I think should be done with them that I have called this hurried meeting. Gentlemen, it seems to me, really, that a perfectly whole and sound ship, suddenly and unexpectedly entering a battle when it is more than half over, must be not only a tremendous weapon in herself, but must necessarily be the cause of a tremendous demoralization in the minds of her enemies. Hence it is that I grudge the time taken up by every word that I am now speaking.

"The enemy is not quite certain of our numbers—they do not know that we have these three ships. I therefore want these three, at once, to retreat westward under forced draught till they see the smoke of the battle, and then, making a detour, to get behind the enemy's troopships, and dash among them from the east. I have very good reasons for knowing that, this time, it is not a matter of supreme national importance whether the foreigners land upon English soil, or not; but still, we do not want the people of Britain to be saying that they had a fleet, and it was not good enough to clear the seas of foreigners. The three ships will therefore worry among the troopships, sinking all they can—on this clear understanding, that they be not careful to destroy straggling ships, that they waste little time, that they dash as soon as may be into the general battle, and finish the destruction of the enemy.

"The three ships which I tell off for this duty are the *Centurion*, the *Benbow*, and the *Hero*.

"With regard to the method to be adopted by the Six, the three which enter a triangle-base will, after as much fight as possible without lowering speed in the middle, pass through and ram the apex; then if possible, and if need be, reform, return, and fight. The three which enter their triangles by an apex, will ram the apex, enter, and fight.

"One of the greatest horrors of modern sea-battles I believe to be the danger we are all in of doing injury to our own ships. But this time we shall be so spread out, that nothing of that sort is likely to happen—to battle-ships at least. But to captains and commanders of cruisers and composite vessels I recommend that reflection. For they, passing into the third line of the enemy, will have a thicker fight, which, I hope, will be conducted on the same principles as those I have enunciated for battle-ships.

"That is all I had to say, and now we must look sharp, I think, especially those Three. I wish you success and good-bye. After all, ships are dead things; it is not ships that fight a battle, but men; and everyone knows that we have the right men. Nice steering, dash, and plenty of quick thunder: that, I think, is much. We ought to be able to destroy this foreign fleet. I have seen their Admiral-in-chief, gentlemen, and he certainly did not look to me as if he knew much about ships and fighting."

A noise of laughter ran round the room. Already the magic of Hardy's plain, but dashing and fascinating personality, had caught and won his colleagues. It was impossible not to see, by the faces around him, that he was approved. He possessed the faculty of making men work with enthusiasm for him.

"What about the battle-word?" said a captain, as they turned to troop away.

"Suppose we say *Trafalgar?*" said Hardy.

"*Trafalgar* has been already used three times during the war," said Lord Beresford. "I had decided upon another, Mr. Hardy."

"What, my lord?"

"*Shoreham*," answered Lord Beresford.

And a murmur of "hear, hear," as the officers busily shook hands, spread half-way up the stairway; and Jack, a short while afterwards, knowing who now led him, received the signalled word with high enthusiasm.

(To be continued.)

WAR BETWEEN SPAIN AND AMERICA!

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"That reminds me of an incident that occurred while I was out in Australia," said uncle Dick. "Did I ever tell you how Captola won her husband? No? Well, I'll tell you now.

"It was an early September morning in the late sixties. The summer rains had made vegetation rank, and the long grass was then thickly matted brown and dry as powder.

"I had been given orders for branding a herd of steers, and as I came to the porch I discovered Cap in her dingy old riding habit, sitting on the edge swinging her feet, her pony browsing just in front of her, and beside her was Henry, the owner of the big 'Home' ranch and her affianced lover. He was earnestly begging the girl to comply with some request.

"'Please, Cappie, yield to me this time.'

"'But I want the gloves and whip.'

"'I'll buy you a gross of silver-mounted whips and a dozen pairs of Jouvin's best—import them especially for the purpose—if you will give up riding at the fair.'

"'That would be a circumstance, wouldn't it?' flashed Captola. 'I could shake them under Miss Oates' nose and say, "There! just see what I got for letting you win the prize." No, Hal, it isn't the gloves or the whip, but a mean little ambition I want to gratify. That woman called me a hoyden, an uncultivated little heathen, and said I couldn't ride a bit. I don't mind the hoyden and heathen. I suppose I am both; but I can ride, and mean to do it.'

"'Little girl, you hurt me when you talk so thoughtlessly.'

"'And you hurt me cruelly,' she cried passionately, as she turned her flashing eyes upon him. 'I am ashamed to acknowledge how much. I fancied you loved me, but you don't. When you see me beside your mother and your incomparable sisters, and—and that horrid prim Miss Oates, you get ashamed of me, and want to bring me to the level of your social world; but you can't do it. I should die under the cultivating process. So you—I think—you can have your ring back,' and with a little sob Captola began to tug at her ring, but Henry caught her hands.

"'My dear little wild bird, I love you. I am years older than you, but I never said that to a woman till I met you. I am graver and quieter than you are, but I like your sunny nature, your winning ways. My mother and sisters do not know you as I do, and they want me to marry Miss Oates. They are looking for flaws in my gem, and I don't want them to have a chance to think they have found one. It is such a trifle I have asked you. Your father is away; there is no one to attend you, as you utterly refuse my escort unless I desert my mother and the other ladies, which I cannot do.'

"Henry paused.

"'No,' Cap replied angrily, as she jerked her hands away. 'They may take me as I am or not at all. If mamma had lived I might have been different, but I've only had dad, and he likes me best as I am. I never would have thought of riding at the fair, only when we were all out on horseback riding one night after Miss Oates first came, she said, purposely for me to hear, that "sticking on" was not good riding by any means, and made fun of my "old-fashioned" riding habit.' And Cap's tears splashed down on the dingy black calico.

"'You are much prettier in it than Miss Oates is in hers,' returned Henry warmly.

"'Oh, yes!' said Cap mockingly, 'much prettier; but you don't want to see me match my skill against her grace; but I will; and I will win the whip and gloves, so now!'

"'Then we will discuss the matter no further.'

"'Adieu, then, sir, until this afternoon, and remember,' she called, as she vaulted on Bret's back and turned to go, 'after to-day, I mean to show that dad has as much money as anybody. I don't care for dress, but if you do you shall be pleased,' and with a saucy kiss from her finger tips she rode away.

"Miss Oates and some of the city girls were going to ride for the prize, properly chaperoned, of course, and Captola had suddenly decided that she would ride too. The rules for entry required saddles, a piece of harness Cap scorned, and, besides her riding alone, Henry feared that she would be defeated by Miss Oates, who was extremely graceful in the saddle, and he knew that would nearly break Cap's heart. He was not aware that Cap had a thoroughbred Australian mare of her father's in training, and a saddle, or that she had added to her wardrobe an almost conventional habit. Captola was so nearly perfect that I verily believe she could have ridden on that saddle standing on her head."

Uncle Dick stopped to chuckle quietly at the remembrance.

"When afternoon came the fair grounds were crowded. I was there, and watched for Captola. Suddenly a little buzz of comment called the attention of all as Captola rode up unattended.

"She was a beauty. Her slender black mare was full of go, and impatient to be off. Cap was as slim and willowy as a cottonwood sapling in her close-fitting black velvet habit. She had put up all her curls under a little black velvet hat, round which was a long ostrich plume.

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"Miss Oates looked like a thundercloud. She had expected to see the girl on her little mustang and in the old black calico habit she usually wore. Henry smiled, and went to her instantly with a loving word, and I knew the clouds had disappeared for a time.

"The tournament began; up and down, round this way and back that, under the coppery sky the ladies rode, then paused. The judges were undecided, so they went through their paces again. No decision. The ladies would please change horses.

"Cap was off Rondo in an instant, but many of the ladies demurred. Miss Oates positively refused to mount anything but her own thoroughbred trained animal. The contest narrowed to Cap and two other bush-bred girls, but even they dared not mount Rondo.

"Cap rode each of the six horses in turn. As she changed the seventh and last time to Rondo, she rode up to me.

"'Uncle'—she always called me uncle—'don't you smell the bush fire?' she asked uneasily.

"'Yes; but it's across the creek. It can't reach us,' I replied.

"'I was thinking of the school-house,' she replied hurriedly, as the judges called. 'School began in Henry's district yesterday, and his sister let her little daughter go with Rose Williams to-day.' And then she rode into the ring.

"I looked at my watch—half-past three—then over to the north. The smoke was rolling up black and thick. I could see an eating line of red; the air was dense and heavy with the smell of burnt grass. If the wind should rise—just then a puff lifted my hat—yes, the schoolhouse was in great danger if the wind veered a point or two.

"I heard a shout of pleasure, and turned to see the judge hand a silver-mounted whip to Cap. She turned her head to look at me, and beyond me she saw the clouds of smoke. She brought the whip down on the flanks of the mare, and, quivering with fright, Rondo reached me in two leaps.

"'The Gill schoolhouse!' gasped Cap, pointing with her whip.

"Up to that moment the bush fire, so common a thing, had not been noticed. In a moment all was confusion. Miss Oates screamed, Mrs. Merriam, Henry's sister, fainted, and his mother turned white. In an instant Henry was out of the buggy with his hands upon Rondo's neck.

"'May I take her, Cappie? Nellie is over there.'

"Cap slid down. The saddle was flung off, and cutting the mare with the silver-mounted whip which Cap thrust into his hand, Henry was off, followed by half a dozen mounted men.

"Just then Cap heard a whinney, and a cold nose was thrust against her face. With a scream of joy, she threw her arms about Bret's neck! Her faithful little pony had broken its hobbles, and followed its mistress. Catching the trailing rope, Cap tied it bridle-fashion in the halter; then slipping out of her velvet riding skirt, and tearing off her gloves, she said to me as she jumped on Bret:

"'I know a short cut below the ford; perhaps I can help,' and was off.

"I followed in the buggy. Cap reached the school-house. The fire-guards were forty feet wide, and the teacher and his pupils had burnt the grass about the building, and felt safe in the school-house. The teacher said he would not let the children go till all danger was passed.

"'She cried to go home, so I permitted her to do so about three o'clock.'

"The teacher told me afterwards that he thought he had been struck by lightning when Cap got her breath.

"'Idiot!' she blazed, 'to let a little town-bred six-year-old child go half a mile through the bush by herself. Why, she isn't tall enough to see over the blue stem in the grass;' and she dashed away.

"At the ranch only the frightened housekeeper appeared. Nellie had not come! Cap rushed into the house and seized a handful of matches and a blanket from a pile that was airing in the porch. This she dipped into the watering trough as she flew by; then she jumped on Bret again, with the dripping blanket before her.

"'The little mischief has gone down in that gully where we found the rabbit's nest, and if the wind changes one atom to the north-west we are doomed,' was her one thought as she dug her heels into Bret's steaming sides.

"Sure enough, as she neared the bank of the gully, she saw a head of dark curls, and a little girl clambering and crying up the steep banks. Cap slid to the ground, and gathered the frightened waif in her arms. It was too late to ride from the fire! With all the strength left her she struck Bret a stinging blow.

"'Go home, if you can,' she cried, and the snorting animal fled before the flames, now hot upon them.

"Cap struck matches, and threw them into the ravine. The fire leapt up and ran over the bank towards the creek. Down over the hot embers, hands and feet blistering, and the child in her arms screaming with pain, Cap crept, dragging the wet blanket with her. The oncoming flames swept to the edge of the gully, and hungrily licked up the bits of dry grass left. They singed Cap's hair and scorched her face. She could barely keep the frantic child under the blanket, and could not save herself.

"The roar and crackle died away towards the creek, the air cooled a little, and then came unconsciousness.

"Just at dusk we found them. The men had all taken the bridge road, two miles round, but Bret and Cap had gone right down over the rocky hill and across the stream, dangerous to ford at the proper place, doubly dangerous there; but they had dared and won.

"Henry and his men rode right into the jaws of death in the blue stem along the creek, and had to retreat till the flames had exhausted themselves at the water's edge.

"We found Bret first. He had stumbled in a dog hole, broken his leg, and died in the fire. After a search of four awful hours we found Cap. Through the gathering gloom the crying of the child guided us to her. The wet blanket had saved Nellie, but poor Cap was nearly dead. She had lost all her yellow curls. Her face was blistered, and her eyes swollen and shut.

"She was wandering a little in her mind, and when Henry gathered her up in his arms she put her blistered little hands about his neck, and said sorrowfully:

"'If I'd only had a mother perhaps I should be different.'

"'Thank God you are your dear, loving little self,' Henry replied, with grave tenderness, as he drew her disfigured face close to his loving heart.

"It was a baptism of fire, but it burnt lots of dross out of several natures, and blazed a safe and sure path for two of the best people I ever knew.

"Yes," concluded Uncle Dick, "I shall always insist that 'knowing how to gallop' was in this instance a very desirable accomplishment, even if not according to the 'English method.'"

GERALD BLAKE.

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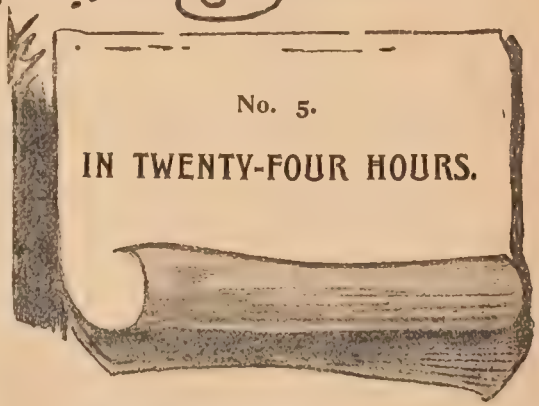
STORIES OF THE STOCK EXCHANGE.

UNEARTHED AND RE-EDITED BY ROBERT MACHRAY.



HENRY FARMER took a last look over a sheet of figures which he held in his shaking hand; the deep lines about his eyes and the trembling lips showed the unmistakable signs of some cruel mental strain he was undergoing—his whole attitude, indeed, was one of deep dejection.

Opposite him stood his clerk, who, by his air of gloom, mirrored back, as it were, only too faithfully the wretchedness of his master.

"Do you see any way, John?" Farmer asked for the hundredth time. "Do you see any way? But there is no way," and the words sounded like the moan of one dying, so hopeless, so despairing were the speaker's accents.

"No, sir—there is no way," echoed the clerk.

A half memory of some phrase about the bitterness of death came into Farmer's mind. He felt that the bitterness of living, so far as his present position was concerned, was infinitely worse.

"I wish I were dead," he said, uttering what was in his mind.

"I would not give way, sir," said his servant. "Why, the man who is on top to-day will be at the bottom to-morrow, and the man who was at the bottom yesterday is on the top to-day. I feel sure that you will master your difficulties before long."

"I have no such hopes," responded Farmer; "and in any case, as you know quite well, there is no possibility of my meeting my engagement to-morrow. There is no escape from the posting of my name to-morrow morning on the blackboard of the Stock Exchange as a defaulter."

The clerk only sighed. What his master said was true. During the past two weeks he had been well aware that nothing short of a miracle would save his master's credit. No miracle had happened, and the worst was come.

In those days when the whole of Europe was once more plunged into the horrors of war by Napoleon, the prices of all securities dealt in on 'Change varied very considerably, and there was always a chance, and something more than a chance even, for a daring swimmer in these troubled waters to make some great haul.

But where others had succeeded, Farmer had failed. When he had become a member of the Stock Exchange he was possessed of a considerable fortune, which he had inherited from his father. Through one mischance or another, he had managed to lose every penny of it, so that now his ruin was complete.

For him it had been one long losing game, with but few breaks of good luck. One melancholy satisfaction, however, was his, and that was that he had fought the game all through with honesty and courage. He had played it squarely, like a man. This had brought him not a few friends, to whom if he had gone earlier he might have applied for assistance and received it. A sort of stubborn pride had prevented him from doing so.

It had been a sweltering hot day in June—the 20th of June, in that great year of this century, 1815, to be exact. It was now late in the afternoon, and the streets in the neighbourhood of the Stock Exchange were deserted, partly owing to the hour and partly to the oppressive sultriness of the air. Most of the brokers and dealers had gone to their homes in the suburbs, or out of town altogether. It was too late to look for help, even if he had wished to do so.

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Once more Farmer went over the list of figures, looking and longing for some loop-hole of escape, but prospect of deliverance was there none. He could even see now quite clearly in his mind his name chalked up on the blackboard, the gibbet of the Stock Exchange.

What made his case more poignant was that about a month before this fatal time he had become the accepted lover of a young lady whom he regarded as the most beautiful and accomplished in the world. She was infinitely dear to him, and he believed with all his soul that she regarded him as infinitely dear to her.

Those who knew the young lady to whom Farmer was betrothed were more than half disposed to agree with him in his rapturous estimate of her charms. They contented themselves, however, by usually saying that she was a pretty creature, and a dear, and a sweet little soul, and so forth. As to what her character really was beneath her airs and graces, no one had any idea.

Nothing so far had occurred in the life of Miss Charlotte Dunbar, who was Farmer's sweetheart, to show whether she had any character at all. Now she was to be suddenly subjected to a cruel test.

Farmer was expected that night at the house of Alderman Dunbar, Charlotte's father, out at Kew. As a man of honour, he felt it was necessary that he should tell her the sorry plight in which he was, and break off the engagement between them at once. At first he thought he would send a letter. Then he told himself this would be cowardly, but in reality the face of the girl he loved came up before him with such an irresistible appeal, that he determined he must see her again, even if it were for the last time, and no matter at what cost to his own feelings.

When he reached the Alderman's mansion, he made his way in the warm dusk of the evening to a certain garden house in the grounds, where he had every reason to expect he would find his lady-love. She was waiting for him there—had been waiting for him some little time, and, though she greeted him with smiles of welcome, there was some hint of reproach upon her face.

Farmer's manner was so embarrassed, so troubled, that she knew at once that there was something seriously wrong with him.

"What is it, Henry?" she immediately asked, and placing her hand in his, seated him beside herself on the bench within the rustic arbour. "Tell me everything, I beg of you."

Henry Farmer had thought a good deal as he had driven along the road, of what he should say. His great anxiety was to spare her as much as possible, and he had framed a story which he hoped would gradually lead up without any harsh shock to the necessity that existed in his unfortunate position for the breaking off of their engagement. But at sight of her all his cunningly devised tale passed from his mind.

His agitation became extreme. After a piteous pause—and he felt the warm pressure of her hand on his through every fibre of his being, he said slowly and painfully:

"I should not have come. I had meant to be brave, and to prepare you as gently as I could for what I have to tell you. But I am not so strong as I thought I was. I have had much to try me lately."

"What is it, Henry? Tell me at once."

"I am ruined," he said desperately. "We must part, dear."

"Henry," was all she said, and now both hands clasped his.

There was a minute or two of silence, and then she said: "Tell me all about it."

Then he explained to her in a clear and simple fashion, so that she could thoroughly understand how he stood, that he had been unsuccessful in his speculations on the Stock Exchange, and that his fortune had been gradually dissipated by the various transactions he had been involved in.

The story, as a general thing, of a man's doings in that great centre of gambling, is not one that can be called romantic, or even very interesting, except to the person or persons most concerned in it. It is hardly one which is likely to fascinate a young girl, whose thoughts are naturally of pleasure and of all the brightness associated with the springtide of life.

Had it been anybody else's story but Henry Farmer's, Charlotte would have given it but scant attention; but as it was her lover's, she listened quite eagerly, helping him by a question here, or a sympathetic murmur there, as he proceeded with his tale.

"So you see, dear," concluded Farmer, who had grown much calmer as he went on with his narrative, "there is nothing for it but that we must part. I have no future to offer you. I am a defeated man, and you are made for success."

"Defeated, but not conquered, Henry, surely," said she, with unexpected firmness.

It was sweet to hear her speak.

"You must not give up, Henry," she continued. "You are young; we are both young. For myself, my whole life is before me; I can and will wait for you. Never fear that I shall desert you,—that is, if you love me as you have so often declared you do."

Henry groaned.

"You don't know quite what you are saying—what it means—the opposition of your father, the long waiting there must be even should he consent to the continuance of our engagement. It is very noble of you, but my duty, I fear, is quite clear."

"It surely lies with ourselves, Henry," she said. "I feel certain that your career will not end in this terrible way. You will get over it, and that before long."

And much more she said to the same effect, so that when he left her it was with lighter heart and firmer step. He still had her promise, and had agreed with her that he would say nothing to her father for the present.

But next morning, after a sleepless night, everything took on a different appearance. His position was so black, so overwhelming for the moment, that all the hope and confidence with which his sweetheart had

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filled him disappeared. The one ugly fact stood out above even the fact of her love for him. And that was that within the next two or three hours he must inevitably be posted on the blackboard of the Stock Exchange.

Almost mechanically he went as usual to his office, where his clerk had already arrived.

"You had better go and tell Tennant and the others that I shall not be able to settle with them this morning."

"There is no other way, sir?" asked the clerk.

Farmer merely shook his head.

Then he wrote a brief letter to the committee of the Stock Exchange, in which he said that he was unable to fulfil his contracts in the House.

Shortly afterwards the clerk was in the Exchange, where he found all its members assembled, busy settling their accounts with each other, some of whom were already beginning to feel some anxiety as to the absence of Henry Farmer. The clerk made his way to Mr. Tennant, the dealer with whom most of his master's transactions had been, and whispering to him drew him aside.

When Tennant heard what had happened he said:

"Well, I am not altogether surprised, for I cannot but know that Mr. Farmer has lost very heavily, and that for a considerable length of time."

Hardly had he uttered these words when the porter stationed at the door suddenly gave three loud and distinctly repeated knocks with a mallet. Instantly there was a dead silence.

The porter announced in the usual formula which obtains on such occasions that Mr. Henry Farmer presented his respects to the House, and regretted that he was unable to comply with his "bargains." In other words, Farmer acknowledged that he was not in a position to fulfil his engagements.

There was a moment's pause, then everything went on as if nothing had happened. Another man had gone down in the maelstrom of speculation, and the waves, having swallowed him up, showed no signs of it after the event. Scarcely a soul even looked at the blackboard on which was written Farmer's name.

When the clerk returned to the office, he found that Farmer had worked himself into a state of frenzy.

"What were they saying?" he asked.

When he was told what a small effect had been produced upon the members of the Stock Exchange by the news of his failures, he could scarcely believe that this matter, so all important to him, had made no greater sensation. As for himself, it was the only thing left in life.

Putting on his hat he went into the streets, and, scarcely knowing what he was doing or where he was going, wandered in the direction of London Bridge, staring in a crazed way into the faces of the people he met.

He was so full of his own trouble that he resented the interest in mere living shown by them in their alert movements. He dumbly wondered that the sun should shine with its accustomed glory, and he so wretched.

This was his frame of mind when at length he found himself standing by one of the parapets of London Bridge. The thought of suicide was not far away. "Why not make an end?" he asked himself.

Hardly struggling with himself, but drifting on along this current of morbid feeling, he was confirmed in it by the discovery that he had but a few shillings in his pocket, and by the reflection that this was all the money he had left in the world.

"Of what use is this?" he said, and flung the silver into the stream. In another moment he was on the parapet and was about to leap.

"You must not give up, Henry"—the words of Charlotte Dunbar came to him quite clearly, as if she had been standing by his side. Above the roar of the city, above the tumult of his thoughts, he heard her speak.

"It surely lies with ourselves, Henry"—that was the high note which she had struck. Again he heard her voice.

Weak and faint he fell back upon the pavement of the bridge.

Even as he fell, some one seized him by the hand and supported him, breaking the shock of the fall.

Farmer looked to see who had given him the helping hand. To his surprise and astonishment, the man who had come to his assistance was dressed in a foreign uniform and wore in his cap the white cockade which showed him to be a partisan of Louis XVIII. That monarch had been driven from Paris a short time before this by Napoleon after his escape from Elba.

"The Man of Blood of the Iron Island," was the title they had given Bonaparte when it was thought the powers had made an end of him. He had broken his bonds, and was now understood to be making a wonderful and magnificent stand—his last, as it proved.

"You are not well, my friend; is it not so?" asked the French officer. "It is indeed warm. Yet it should be a day of sunshine, a day of glory."

"A day of sunshine indeed," said Farmer, to whom the brightness of the day was a mockery.

"Yes, my friend," returned the Frenchman. "There is great news, wonderful news. The tyrant, the usurper, the devil—that Bonaparte, has been overthrown at last by your Duke of Wellington and by the Prince Blücher."

"Napoleon defeated? How do you know? Pardon me, there are so many rumours, and they nearly all prove to be false."

"This is no idle, lying rumour," said the officer. "I have it on the very best authority. See here, my friend, I have just come from the Embassy—the French Embassy—where my chief, the Count le Chartre, told me that Bonaparte had been annihilated in a great battle fought last Sunday not far from Brussels, There is no doubt whatever. Louis will now return to the city and sit on the throne of his fathers."

"How can the ambassador have heard this so quickly?" asked Farmer. "No one in London

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seemed to know anything about it a few minutes ago—at least, not in the City."

"A courier only arrived two hours ago; he had travelled from Ostend by a swift-sailing packet. After he had landed, he spared neither himself nor his horses to bring the intelligence to the Embassy. That is all I know, my friend."

"It is true, then?" said Farmer.

"Quite true—you may depend upon it," and the impulsive Frenchman shook hands with Farmer, exclaiming with joy, "The tyrant is overthrown."

It was in this way that Farmer heard of the Battle of Waterloo. Notwithstanding his dejection, the news of that great victory made him feel happier, and took him for a time out of himself. Suddenly a gleam of hope shone upon the miserable man.

"How many people in London," he asked himself, "had heard of Waterloo?"

An idea now came to him with lightning rapidity—all his despair and helplessness immediately gave place to quick and energetic action. He strode along the streets at the top of his speed towards his office, and yet not so quickly as to prevent him from regarding with some scrutiny the appearance of those he met.

No, there was nothing unusual in their aspect. Quite evidently these people did not know that a great battle had been fought, otherwise they would have certainly shown it in one way or another; and if they did not know—here, in the heart of the City, where everything, generally speaking, was known sooner than anywhere else—it was long odds that the Stock Exchange knew nothing of it either.

Having arrived at his office, he asked his clerk if there was any special news, or if there was any movement of an unusual character on 'Change. The clerk, who evidently thought that the question referred to his master's bankruptcy, replied that he had been in and out, but had heard nothing except some expressions of regret that Henry Farmer had succumbed.

Merely saying, "I think I have found a way out," Farmer dashed downstairs, and in two or three minutes was closeted with the senior partner of the great house of the Brownes, who were amongst the most influential members of the Stock Exchange, and who he knew were friendly to himself, and likely from what had already transpired between them in the way of business to place considerable confidence in him.

Mr. Albert Browne, on meeting Farmer, immediately took the opportunity of condoling with him on what had happened, and asked him why it was that he, Farmer, had not at least given them the chance of considering whether they should help him or not before the worst had taken place.

Scarcely pausing to thank Browne for what he had said, he asked him if had still sufficient faith in him to believe in what he was about to tell him, and to act on that belief by undertaking an extensive operation that morning on the Stock Exchange. He had received news, he said, and that from a source of absolute authority, of the very last importance—the result of which, if acted upon at once, would be undoubtedly a very successful piece of business.

But, before he would impart to him what he knew, he thought it only right that it should be on the distinct understanding that he was to receive one half of whatever profits—he was sure they would amount to a large sum—might be realised from the operation on 'Change.

"Otherwise, I presume," said Browne, "you will take the offer of this news elsewhere?"

"You could hardly expect me to do anything else," Farmer replied.

"I will make this bargain with you," said Browne, "if the news is as important as you say, I will either accept your offer—that is to give you half the profits that may ensue from what follows—or, if I do not consider the news important enough, I pledge my word to keep silence with regard to it, and not to be influenced by what you may tell me in any of our dealing to-day in the market."

The bargain was made. Without reserve Farmer told Browne exactly what had happened on London Bridge, and what the French officer had said.

Browne was convinced of the truth of what Farmer had told him, and resolved to take instant advantage of it. He rushed out into the street and succeeded in the course of half an hour in purchasing consols to a large amount.

In the meantime, Farmer, who had been greatly steadied by his satisfactory interview with Browne, and who already felt a different man from the wretched being who had meditated self-destruction on London Bridge only a few minutes before, had been thinking hard as to how he might further derive advantage from this unique opportunity.

Then it occurred to him that there was no reason why he should not make a bargain with another firm of stock-brokers similar to that he had made with Browne. He had given no promise to the latter not to communicate the all-important intelligence to another.

Having thought the matter over, he proceeded to another firm, that of Richards and Martin. There were no keener men of business in London than the two partners who traded under that name, and Farmer felt that if he could only succeed in convincing them that Waterloo had been fought and Napoleon overwhelmed, they would be ready to make even larger purchases than Browne.

Without losing any further time Farmer made his way to their private room, where he was lucky enough to find both men together. They had just come in to have lunch, which they were in the habit of having there, so that they could discuss the transactions they had undertaken during the early part of the day, and consider how they should proceed in the afternoon. They invited him to join them in the repast.

Here again he had to listen to the same commiseration for his fallen fortunes. "Why had he not asked them to give him a little assistance; it was a mistake to be too proud," and so on.

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Farmer thanked them, and told them that if they desired to do so, to help him, he was in a position to allow them to do so with the greatest possible advantage to themselves. Then he made them an offer similar to that he had made to Browne, and it was accepted, on much the same conditions.

So, once again, he poured out the story, the almost miraculous story, that he had been told by the French ensign.

Both men listened to him with the utmost eagerness. If the story were true, there could be no hesitation as to the course to be followed, and that immediately. Not only would the Funds rise considerably, but every other class of security would be enormously enhanced in value. They must buy for the "rise."

But was it true?

It was not without some difficulty that Farmer managed at length to impress them with the confidence in the Frenchman's story he himself possessed.

But he did succeed in the end.

The two partners whispered for a moment together, and agreed that Martin was forthwith to go on to 'Change and to purchase £200,000 worth of Consols and other Government securities. Meanwhile, Richards was to stay with Farmer, and to prevent him, either by holding him in talk, or forcibly if need be, from leaving the room. He might tell someone else, and thus the market would be spoilt.

It seemed to Farmer that an impossibly short time had elapsed to allow of Martin having been in the market and returned, when he appeared, his face working with excitement, to say that there had already been heavy purchases of Consols during the last half-hour, and that the price had gone up three per cent. He was afraid to buy.

But Farmer, who knew that the increased price was in all probability the result of Browne's investments, declared that even a rise of three per cent. was not nearly sufficient to discount the effects of so tremendous a victory.

Urged by his own imperious necessities, he used such language that once more the two partners were persuaded. This time, however, they determined to stake what was practically the whole credit of their firm, and their entire deposits with their bankers, in the game.

Their purchases now were not to be by the hundred thousand, but by the million. Afterwards, when the whole affair was over, the partners confessed that they had never acted in such a rash manner before in their lives, and they solemnly swore never to do so again.

The immense amount of buying done by this firm, added to the high character it bore upon the Stock Exchange, drove Omnium—which a week before had been as low as 2 premium—up to 5. The market took on a look of subdued excitement, of waiting, of expectancy; but with the exception of Farmer, the Brownes, and Richards and Martin, no one had the least idea that one of the greatest and most decisive battles in history had been fought.

Late that same evening Colonel Percy, the aide-de-camp of the Duke of Wellington, arrived in London with dispatches from that general, giving a tolerably full account of the defeat of Napoleon. The ministers lost no time in communicating the joyful news to the Prince Regent, and the following morning a *Gazette Extraordinary* was published by the Government announcing the overthrow of the hated Bonaparte.

The news at first seemed too good to be true, but as fuller details were received—circumstantial details mentioning, for instance, the number of cannon taken on the field, doubt gave place to certainty, and the nation rejoiced with such rejoicings as had never been before witnessed in England.

The effect upon the Stock Exchange was electrical, amidst scenes, the excitement of which defy description, the price of the Funds went up by leaps and bounds, until a rise of fifteen per cent., the greatest rise they were ever known to experience, was registered.

Of course the Brownes, and Richards and Martin sold out what they had purchased on the previous day as near the top as they could get.

Farmer's share of the profits realised from the operations of the two firms in question on that one memorable occasion exceeded £100,000.

He returned next day to the Stock Exchange, where he liquidated all accounts in full—rather against the advice of some of the members, who declared that it would be considered an act of weakness to act in this manner.

It is further recorded of him that soon afterwards he married Miss Charlotte Dunbar; that he amassed a large fortune out of his speculations, which after Waterloo were marked by as great a success as they had been characterised by failure before it; that he purchased with the money he had realised, a large estate in the county of Middlesex; and having done this, he made a vow to leave the Stock Exchange alone for ever—a vow which he religiously kept.

(*Next week: "Rothschild Outwitted."*)

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THE RIVAL QUEENS.

A TALE OF OLD FRANCE RETOLD FROM THE FRENCH BY MARY FERMOR

SUMMARY.

Amaury Montreul, a knight, and Mahmoud-el-Reis, a Saracen, meet on the road to Paris. The former's mission is to kill the Queen of France; the latter's to kill the King. At the same time two children, Eric and Eve, are on their way to Paris to aid the Queen, and overhear the conversation of these two horsemen. Shortly afterwards a knight and his page give the children a lift on the road, and, on arriving at Paris, place them under the care of the Freemasons. Maitre Samson, Montruel's secretary, tries to induce Tristan de Pamiers, king of the law students, to raise a rebellion in favour of Agnes de Méranie against Philip's consort, Queen Ingeburge. Albret, the King's page, takes Eve, *alias* Little Adam, to the King, who gives her permission to visit Ingeburge in her captivity in the Abbey St. Martin. Meanwhile Agnes de Méranie pays a visit to Notre Dame with Amaury Montruel, and stills the ominous cries of the people by distributing among them her paste jewels. In the cathedral she meets Mahmoud-el-Reis, who is carving a figure of the Virgin, and tries to win his regard by presenting him with pearls, which he crushes under his feet when she has gone. Returning from the visit to the cathedral, the members of the Royal party are intercepted by the Free-Lances, but are finally allowed to go on their way. Thinking this wild crew may be of future use to her, Agnes de Méranie determines to enlist the sympathies of their leader, Antoine Cadocu. To accomplish her object she visits him the same evening, accompanied by Montruel, in the low tavern in which he and his followers hold their nightly revels. She is very rudely treated, and returns with Montruel without having attained her object of enlisting the sympathies of Cadocu. Montruel's secretary, Samson, hints to the King that Agnes has been seen out late at night, and, although he confirms his suspicions, he does not allow Agnes to suspect his knowledge. During the sitting of a council appointed by the Pope to decide which of the King's two wives is his lawful consort, Montruel visits Mahmoud-el-Reis to urge him to fulfil his promise to murder Ingeburge without delay. In order to gain access to the Queen's presence, the two men arrange that Mahmoud shall feign sickness and be taken to the hospital attached to the Abbey, where the Queen is confined. Eric, being at work on the cathedral as a mason, overhears the plot and determines to save Ingeburge. Meanwhile the Saracen partakes of a drug which renders him unconscious, is conveyed to the Abbey by Montruel, and ministered to by the Queen herself. She is heavily veiled, and Mahmoud is unaware of her identity. He tells her of his misson to the Abbey, hearing which Ingeberge faints. In order to restore her, he raises her veil, and is surprised to find her to be the living image of his beloved Dilah, and her twin soul. For this reason he vows to protect her from all harm, even when Ingeburge confesses that she is the King's wife. After considerable delay Eric succeeds in gaining audience with the Prior, and tells him of the Queen's danger.

CHAPTER XVII.

The Twin Soul.

When the Moslem finished his story with the words "That is why I wished to kill the Queen," all sense of personal danger had left Ingeburge's heart, but she cowered under the mysterious power of this man's will, and in her tortured mind there rose visions of the King's dead body lying in one of those rooms at the Louvre that she had not been permitted to enter, pierced to the heart with that cruel, glittering weapon that flashed even now before her eyes. She could not even plead for her lord's life, her tongue was paralysed by the awful weight of fear.

But Mahmoud's voice softened as he saw the sorrow-stricken woman crouching at his feet, the passion faded from his face and the blood-lust died out of his heart. It was as if Dilah suffered at his hands, and as though she were pleading for her twin soul.

"I have sought in the Western Heavens for the shining star that Dilah watches when she utters my name ere seeking her couch, but the star is not there," he said. "The mystic cord which unites our hearts has thus been broken, and it is to replace our lost star that the kindly Fates have led me to the side of my beloved's twin soul. But what shall I say to Dilah," he broke off suddenly, "when she asks me what I have done to win her? When she bids me show her the infidel's blood that was to be the price of her hand? Will she not ask me if I am a true man, or a base coward, unworthy of a woman's love?"

As these thoughts coursed through his mind, Ingeburge remained silent, save for a stifled sob which now and then broke from her, but a powerful advocate was pleading her cause in this strange man's breast. Mahmoud-el-Reis had never before hesitated in the path of what he believed to be his duty, but now he had a hard battle to fight with himself. On the one hand was arrayed the promise of Dilah as his bride, the solemn oath which bound him and all members of his order to obey without flinching the master's orders, the wild fanaticism which is born in every son of the desert; while against all this was a dream, a mere sweet illusion, a

Passed the back of his hand over his burning forehead.

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poetic fancy, fostered by the wealth of his artist's imagination.

The forces were unequally matched, but the weaker side was embodied in the form of a lovely woman, living, loving and weeping beneath his eyes.

Mahmoud-el-Reis loved with the intensity that characterised his whole being, and love mastered fanaticism—the embodied dream chased away even the vision of the incensed Lord of the Mountain, for behind his dark tyrannical face smiled the sweet eyes of Dilah with loving approval.

The fair daughter of the North seemed merged into one being with her dark-eyed, olive-skinned sister of the South, whom the Moslem loved with a love stronger than death.

He shook himself with an unwonted gesture of impatience, and passed the back of his hand over his burning forehead, then, turning to Ingeburge, he spoke out the tormenting thoughts of his heart.

"Listen, Queen. What does all that matter? She and you are but one soul parted in the flesh by the will of Allah. If I strike your heart, shall I not pierce hers? And if I raise my hand against the King, will not you fall beneath the blow?"

Though much of what he said was obscure to her, Ingeburge had that keen intuitive sympathy that so quickly establishes itself between those who love, and she could follow the workings of his mind sufficiently to grasp his meaning. She saw a ray of light shining in upon her soul's darkness, a gleam of hope in her hour of despair.

"Yes, yes. If the King dies, I die too," she said fervently.

"Then you must live!" cried the Moslem, "for if you died, would not Dilah, your twin soul, soon languish and fade in the tomb? Do I not know that you two share but one soul, and when I meet her there in the shady palm-grove, radiant and lovely in the joy of our reunion, I shall say:

"'My poniard was raised, the King's life was mine! I could have fulfilled my oath, and gained with one blow the joys which the Prophet has promised to his faithful children! I could have——'

"I can still do it!" he repeated almost savagely, as the old struggle once more threatened to assail him.

The Queen looked up at the sudden change in his voice and watched the workings of his face with breathless anxiety, but the dark mood passed and the invisible foe was beaten off for ever. The victory was gained, blind fanaticism gave way before love, tender pity broke the iron band that bound him to deeds of blood.

"Your King shall live, but he shall live to love you, I swear it by the name of the Prophet! And when I hold Dilah in my last embrace I shall say:

"Beloved, I return to a traitor's death, not to the nuptial feast; for I have given my life and my earthly bliss to save thy twin soul."

As he spoke these words in a kind of dreamy ecstasy, a sound was heard outside. Hasty steps were coming down the corridor, doors were being noisily opened and shut and voices were heard talking in excited tones. Ingeburge turned to listen, and the Syrian resumed his usual calm demeanour.

A woman's voice was heard among the rest, saying:

"This way, the Prior said it was here that he had brought Queen Angel!"

"Eve, it is Eve," murmured Ingeburge.

The door was forced open from the corridor and Eric dashed in.

"Look in every cell," cried a man. "If no one has gone out of the Abbey we must find the assassin."

"That is Eric's voice," said the Queen wonderingly.

The steps had reached the door, a hand shook it from outside and a voice exclaimed:

"This is the last cell! It must be here. Now we shall have the assassin!"

"Queen," said Mahmoud impressively, "if you wish to save the King's life, you would do well to protect mine, for he is threatened by other daggers than this."

"Eve, Eve," called Ingeburge, "I am here, come to me, my sister."

The Syrian said no more, but stood watching the Queen and calmly awaiting the issue of events. At the Queen's cry the door was forced open from the corridor and Eric dashed in, closely followed by Eve and half-a-dozen of the archers who formed the guard of the Abbey. An excited group of monks and lay-brothers remained outside, peering in with timid curiosity at the dreaded stranger.

The young Dane was armed with a dagger which he would have plunged into the Moslem's breast, but Ingeburge stayed his hand, and, hard though it was, he obeyed her. Eve was clinging convulsively to the Queen, as though to interpose her slender form between that of her mistress and the assassin's poniard. At any rate she was determined that if she might not die *for* her beloved sister Angel, she would die *with* her.

For a moment the guards stood paralysed at the sight of the man they had seen carried in senseless, and whom Brother Martin had spoken of as being dead two hours before.

The Syrian was standing erect, in the full vigour of his manhood, with all his faculties of mind and body in perfect order.

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He drew the dagger which he had sheathed.

It must be sorcery; he was in league with the Evil One. It were well to rid the earth of such a child of darkness, if only their weapons would avail in such a case.

Three or four archers sprang upon him, but he made no attempt to protect himself beyond raising his hand to push aside the halberd nearest to his breast, with as unconcerned a gesture as if he had been brushing off a fly.

Turning to Ingeburge he said, with dignity and calmness:

"Queen, you have to speak but one word to save my life! I await that gracious favour at your hands."

"Down with the assassin! He would kill the Queen! Down with him!" cried the frightened little crowd outside.

Ingeburge was touched by his confidence in her and she recognised his claim. She opened her lips to speak the word he needed, when the vision of him as he was an hour ago, fierce, cold and implacable, returned to her with overpowering force. She hesitated, the words would not come, her eyes again caught sight of the crystal poniard which he still held in his strong grasp.

"He is an infidel, how can I trust him? If I spare his life he will take that of Philip, my lord and husband!" she said to herself, as the horrible picture of the murdered King rose again before her eyes.

"Seize him!" she panted with a terrified shudder.

Still Mahmoud-el-Reis made no effort to defend himself, and though he was more than a match for his enemies, he submitted quietly while they bound him hand and foot with the ropes they had brought for the purpose. Then turning towards the Queen, his face softened by a sad smile, he murmured.

"I forgive you, for you have wronged me out of love to him! I read it in your eyes, and I forgive you for love's sake! You love well, indeed!"

While this little scene was being enacted in the cell, those without experienced a sudden shock. It was as though the ancient walls which had stood the test of time through three centuries, had shivered at the touch of some mysterious, unknown hand.

All eyes and thoughts were turned on the Moslem as the probable cause of this incident. He had summoned the powers of darkness to aid him in his hour of need! This was the first solution of the mystery that naturally suggested itself to the minds of timid, superstitious men, but stern fact soon proved that here was no invisible foe. A surging, shouting, motley throng of men, armed with any and every weapon they could lay their hands on, followed by a train of shrieking women, now surrounded the Abbey, and were battering the gates with unmistakable earthly violence, however much their motives might savour of demoniacal intent.

Most of the Prior's timid flock ran hither and thither in search of a safe hiding place, but a few of the more daring spirits ranged themselves alongside of the archers and sought to inspire their weaker brethren with something of their courage.

"Help! Help! The glorious Abbey of Saint Martin is attacked! To the rescue, one and all!"

Their efforts availed but little, and it was a very small, if resolute body that prepared to ward off the assailants.

The archers hurriedly left the cell, and only one or two monks remained with Ingeburge and Eve, while Eric constituted himself their guard. He hardly ever took his eyes from the expressive face and motionless form of the captive Syrian, and though he longed to go and take his part in the thickest of the fight, fear for his Queen, should she be left again in the power of this desperate man, prompted him to stay at his post.

Mahmoud-el-Reis, even when apparently most helpless, had the power of inspiring awe in those who had reason to fear him.

From time to time Eve thought she caught the name of "Ingeburge, Ingeburge," amongst the mad confusion of sounds. But who could dare to use the Queen's name at such a time?

The monks were too frightened to move, they felt danger coming nearer every moment, and yet they dare not flee before it. They prayed with all the fervour of their hearts, and asked who it could be that dared to invade so sacred a retreat! What heathen hords had over-run the realm, to bring back the horrors of Atilla or Genseric?

The only two who maintained anything like their wonted composure were the Queen and the Moslem. Her whole mind was still dominated by Mahmoud-el-Reis, she could not keep her terrified gaze from his face. His mission of death, his strange story of love, his generous abandonment of self, all kept coursing through her distracted mind, and keen pangs of self-reproach stung her as she looked at the bonds which her word had fastened on him.

More than once she was tempted to say to Eric:

"Cut those bonds! He is a true man, he has spared my life and has promised me that of the King! He alone can save the life of Philip Augustus!"

But the words failed to find utterance. The prejudices of her life and training were too powerful to give way permanently before a romantic sense of interest and admiration for a Moslem assassin.

So absorbed was she in her own mental struggle that the greater one going on below them made no impression on her. Every time she caught Mahmoud's eye, with its look of deep and resigned melancholy, her heart was touched, even though she trembled with fear. She felt as one gazing into some unfathomable abyss which no human eye can penetrate, and whose depths refuse to reveal the secrets which attract us.

He was huddled on the floor just as the guards had left him, passive and observant, too proud to ask for mercy, too much of a fatalist to experience fear.

The noise had become deafening, and it was evident to the listeners that the attacking force had succeeded in forcing an entrance by the great door of the Abbey.

Mahmoud's quick ear caught every variation of sound, and at this last developement a curious smile crossed his face.

Eric, who was watching his prey with eyes quickened by anxiety for those he loved, noticed this change of expression,

and though he consoled himself with the thought that the Moslem was too securely bound to attempt an escape, he involuntarily felt a sensation of fear, as if this man knew of some new danger threatening Queen Angel. The Syrian's smile gave a fresh significance to the tumult, in Eric's mind, and he drew the dagger which he had sheathed at the Queen's command.

Mahmoud-el-Reis saw the action and made an almost imperceptible gesture of contempt.

So they waited.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Maître Samson in Command.

In order to explain the cause of the unexpected disturbance at the Abbey St. Martin, it will be necessary to go back to Paris early in the evening of the same day.

At the hour when the masons left work at Nôtre-Dame, and the great building with its frame of scaffolding was consigned to peace and solitude during the hours of the night, a large number of apprentices, journeymen and lookers-on were wending their way, with wild mirth, in the direction of St. Jaques-la-Boucherie, where Montruel's house was so cleverly concealed. But though in a measure the guests of "The Friend of the King" these worthy gentlemen were not going to be entertained at that nobleman's residence.

While the regular, hard-working masons sought their well-earned rest and enjoyed their frugal supper, this noisy, idle troop disappeared within the various taverns in the adjoining streets of ill-fame.

Another crowd, consisting of the rabble which congregated round the cathedral, and which represented a still lower stratum in the community, emerged from the inclosure and swarmed over the great bridge, and every dirty alley sent forth its contribution to swell the unsavoury train. Lame men managed to limp along at no inconsiderable pace, the blind found eyes to see their way in the thronged and narrow thoroughfares, women dropped their feeble offspring for which they had been pleading so pathetically during the day, and all rushed madly on.

Every scoundrel and vagabond in Paris was let loose to work the will of Madame Agnes and her henchman Amaury Montruel.

A handful of Free-lances escorted this undisciplined mob, which as a rule was kept out of sight as a body, and only drew attention to its existence by individual appeals or by appearing in small detachments; but to-night was their carnival, and however empty their pockets, each man and woman was catered for right royally as they presented themselves at the tavern doors.

Wine flowed in rivers to slake the thirst and fire the passions of the ignorant and outcast, who were thus being bribed to carry out the designs of the unscrupulous woman who shared the throne.

The favourite place of meeting was undoubtedly the tavern kept by Maître Jean Fontanelle, the husband of "La Fontanelle," who had unconsciously led poor Agnes the Fair to her doom at the hands of Montruel. This seemed to be the head-quarters of the ragged army.

Tristan de Pamiers and Maître Samson were chief in command, and the latter was giving orders to those who were to act under them.

Samson's face looked more than ever like that of an antiquated witch. He had consumed an amount of wine since the morning that would have killed two ordinary men, especially when the quality of the beverage was taken into consideration, but his head was still clear, even though his attenuated legs showed some disinclination to carry his meagre body.

Tristan was drunk and made no attempt to conceal it, though his libations had fallen far short of those consumed by his comrade. He was lolling on a wooden bench, while the crafty clerk was endeavouring to steady himself on a rickety table, rallying his trusty lieutenants round him.

"Come here, Ezekiel! Here, Tréfouilloux! Jean, Pierre, François, Giles, all of you! Come here."

The first to answer this summons were, as might be supposed, Ezekiel and Tréfouilloux, though it would have needed a quick eye to recognise our afflicted friends of the pavement. No one who had in the kindness of his heart or the keenness of his curiosity, parted with his hardly earned money to peer for the *very last* time into the horrible wound of the wild boar's victim; or had stopped to throw a coin into the lap of the twisted and tortured ex-crusader, could have detected any resemblance to these poor creatures in the able-bodied, if somewhat lean men who came forward to answer Maître Samson's hoarse, rasping cry.

They were both wearing the loose cassock and small clothes affected by the students, while battered caps were cocked jauntily on one side of their low, receding foreheads.

They looked to the last degree repulsive, each if possible uglier than his fellow, but still they might easily have been mistaken for two of those hapless, prematurely-aged scholars whose intellect and reputation had long been swamped in the wine cup.

Pierre, Jean, François and the others, all similarly attired, soon crowded round the table, and in a few moments the tavern was thronged to suffocation with these spurious students.

At the sight of our two famous friends, Ezekiel and Tréfouilloux, Tristan did not know whether to laugh or to curse. He was just clear enough in his head to feel

"Hola! Comrade!" cried Samson, plucking his sleeve

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thoroughly ashamed of the night's proceedings, in fact he could not have played his part if he had been sober, for he was proud of his title of "King of the Basoche," and loved his festive subjects after his own wild fashion. As for this rabble, he would gladly have helped to hang the lot of them!

"*Tête-diable;*" he groaned: "It's desecration! profanity!"

"Bah!" retorted Samson, who had caught the words. "We've only got knaves instead of fools. And for my part, I'd rather have this lot than the other!"

Tristan had to clutch the gold coins in his pocket to keep his hands off the man who thus sneered at him and his fellows. How gladly would he have plunged his dagger into the heart of his hated pay-master!

The leader of the expedition now began to harangue his forces in a voice that would not have done discredit to a town-crier. He complimented them on their appearance and praised their untried bravery. He impressed upon them the dignity of their present position as representatives of the great Republic of letters, and exhorted them to display their learning for the benefit of those whom their united action was to influence.

"As we pass through the streets," he continued, "we want all the people to say as they listen to our learned remarks, 'There is the University, the daughter of the Church, protesting against Ingeburge the alien, the scourge of France, the curse of the King!'"

"Capital, first-rate, master!" applauded Tréfouilloux. "The people of Paris shall say what you wish: I'll answer for that. *Magnificat! Cicero! Benedictus!* Only let us be off before the old monks have emptied their larder!"

"A good thought, friend, but the Abbey cellars will repay your trouble even if the larder is scantily provisioned. *En route!*"

The supposed members of the University made a desperate rush for the door, pushing, jostling and trampling on each other without a qualm as they thought of the wine in store for them, and after they had forced their way out of the tavern they speedily found themselves in collision with the groups that were standing in the narrow street.

Tristan, who had been listening to the oration with increased disgust and repugnance made no offer to move, but sat gnawing his nails in horrible indecision.

"Hola! Comrade!" cried Samson, plucking his sleeve with a bad attempt at gaiety. "Aren't you coming with us?"

"It's profanation! Do it yourself!"

"Nonsense, we want you to talk Latin, the pure language of the classics. The jargon of these rascals is all very well for the mob, with its asses' ears, but if any scholar passed us!"

"Heaven forbid!" muttered Tristan as he bent his head lower at this picture of further degradation.

Maitre Samson watched him with an evil leer, and bending down, he whispered:

"Have you forgotten the prettiest girl in Paris? Eh?"

"She's gone," sighed Tristan. "I've watched the house for days, and have hunted in every nook and corner of the city, but I can't find a trace of her! Ah! she was a little beauty!" he went on in a maudlin tone. "Never was a form so graceful or a face so sweet! Venus herself could not have surpassed her! And to think I have lost her!"

"Yes, she was a nice little thing, as girls go," agreed Samson, "and you're right, she's lost to *you* at any rate."

The King of the Basoche sat up and looked hard at his companion in whose tone he thought he detected some hidden meaning.

"Lost to *me!* What do you mean. Do you know where she is then?"

Samson answered by a vague movement of the head, which caused his exasperated listener to spring to his feet and seize him by the shoulders, shouting as he did so:

"Speak, you cur! Or I'll make you tell me pretty quickly!"

"If I tell you, will you swear to come with us?"

"Yes, even though I loathe the whole thing! It's profanation!"

"And you'll speak Latin all the time?"

"Yes, Latin, Greek, Hebrew, anything you like."

"Well then, my friend, you'll have better luck than you deserve, for the prettiest girl in Paris is in the very place we're going to."

"What, at the Abbey St. Martin?"

"Yes, in attendance on Madame Ingeburge."

Tristan clapped on his shabby cap, gave himself a good shake and, dashing through the door, had soon fought his way to the front of the procession, shouting Latin oaths at the top of his voice.

Samson followed more leisurely, chuckling to himself:

"I thought *that* card would win the game for us."

In the Rue des Arcis the University, headed by a gorgeous banner, met the brotherhood of the Freemasons who were also flying their colours, and with combined forces the whole mass moved forward with some show of order in the direction of the Porte aux Peintres, followed by the usual train of stragglers that go with a multitude.

Wherever they passed the greatest excitement greeted them. Heads were thrust out of windows and doors, men wondered, while women pretended to be frightened, and all listened eagerly to catch the words shouted from time to time by a man with a clear, strong voice:

"*Le loz des écoles et les privilèges de l'Université!*' while the crowd supplied the chorus:

"Death to Ingeburge the alien! Down with the ruin of France and the curse of the King!"

Those who had not seen the prologue to this shameless comedy, marked only its apparent significance. The worthy citizens saw in this masquerading mob the representatives of learning uniting in one common demonstration against the cause of the nation's woe.

They knew that the King supported and encouraged the schools, and, to their ignorant minds, it was convincing that such a body should express publicly their opinion on so weighty a matter. They were impressed by the high-sounding jargon and very soon the by-standers took up the cry they *did* understand: "Down with the alien!" The whole city seemed infected by the uproar, and the numbers swelled at every step, till it looked as if all Paris had gone mad together.

"This is a grand success," said Samson, "the beggars are doing their work well!"

"Yes," answered Tristan, with a high-flown Latin quotation, "but I wish they would get on a little faster."

Ezekiel was meanwhile shouting lustily:

"*Tirliput, Credo, Discipulis suis, Ergo, Porro Confiteor!*" while Tréfouilloux kept the ball rolling with his favourite stock phrases.

How could such a display of learning fail to make a deep impression on the unlearned and credulous?

By the time they reached the Porte aux Peintres half the townsfolk had joined them. Some were decrying Ingeburge with the full force of their lungs, others were trying to imitate the doggerel rubbish which they mistook for Latin, and all were in a state of the wildest excitement. Vagabonds, mock masons and sham students yelled and swore in turn, as if the Furies had been let loose on the earth, and on all sides of the main body, tawdrily dressed girls and unkempt women danced and sang with a zeal that was even surpassing that of the men.

Most of these attendant dames were supplied with cans of wine and drinking cups, with which to ply the guards in charge of the gate, by which means they hoped that the rabble might gain easy egress from the city.

(To be continued.)

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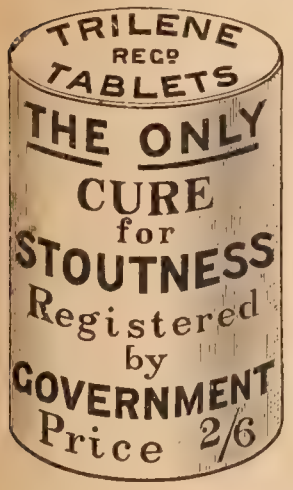

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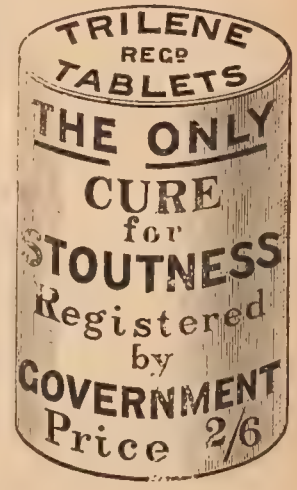

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MR. J. THOMAS writes: "When I started the Tablets I weighed 17½st., and have got down to 14st. 9lb."

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MR. WM. USHER says: "A sister of mine, who was 17st., was greatly reduced by your Tablets to 15st."

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A. D. BILLINGS, Bell Inn, Aldershot, writes: "Have derived great benefit already. Less in size and weight, breathing greatly improved."

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MISS C. E. SINGLETON, 3, Courtenay Terrace, Teignmouth, says: "They have done me a great deal of good, and I will do my best to make them known. You may use this letter as you please."

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MRS. EDMONDS, Pontyguesta, Pontychin, Llantrissant, says: "I have lost more than a stone in a very short time."

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E. NICHOLSON, Crossfield, Staniland, Halifax, says: "I am pleased to say your Tablets are lessening my size very much, and my two sisters are going in for your pleasant treatment."

COUNTESS G. FÜRSTENBERG, of Stammheim, Germany, writes: "They act speedily and well."

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"CAPTAIN" HIGGINS.

"OF course, I wasn't a captain, but then he'd no call to go and hurt my feelings," argumentatively said Captain Higgins.

"Ah," said the ship's steward, "some folks 'ill say anythink. Down him with a belayin' pin's wot you ought to have done."

"I don't hold with spoilin' good belayin' pins on them officers in the Queen's service," continued Captain Higgins, dreamily watching his smoke-wreaths float through the air. "What with keepin' their ships from runnin' aground and maintainin' discipline, 'taint no easy time for 'em; but still, as I said before, they needn't put on airs when I comes along. I'm a sort of captain in my way; if it ain't their way, they might stretch a point."

"From wot I knows of 'em," suggested the ship's steward, "they'd rather empty one, it being, as you may say, the manner of all folks that float the seas to swallow whatever they can get hold of. It's the salt in the air as makes 'em so thirsty. Somehow, the air's saltish to-night."

Captain Higgins, taking the hint, sent into the hut for liquid refreshments. The two old cronies sat at the Captain's little wicket-gate and watched the stately ships sail on through the Black Sea mouth of the Bosphorus.

"Fifteen years have I commanded the lifeboat here," resumed Captain Higgins—"Fifteen years have I commanded the lifeboat up here, the only Englishman among 'em, and folk have took to callin' me 'Captain' quite natural-like. I am captain of that 'ere crew, and every man of 'em knows it."

"To be sure!" said the ship's steward; "to be sure! You have a way with you when roused, Captain Higgins, as makes it impossible for even a 'eathen in his blindness to mistake you."

"Bein' gen'rally respected and looked up to," said Captain Higgins, soothed by the steward's whole-hearted admiration, "when I hears as Her Majesty's gunboat *Snapshot* is a-comin' up the Bosphorus jest to give the Sultan wot for if he doesn't behave 'isself——"

"Abdul the Dam——"

"Ladies present," said Captain Higgins severely, pointing with the stem of his pipe in the direction of the hut. "Ladies, steward; where's your manners?"

The abashed steward murmured an apology.

"When I hears about the gunboat, I goes down to Pera on board that little black craft there (he pointed to his horse, which was tied to the railing, too dejected even to swish away the flies), and orders some cards to be printed with 'Captain Higgins' on 'em."

"And quite right, too," murmured the steward, looking wistfully at the bottle on the deal table.

"Then I calls on the ship and sends in my card. I was shown down into the first officer's cabin. Presently he sails in holdin' my card in his hand and a-lookin' at me hard. '*Captain* Higgins?' says he, with a snigger. '*Captain!* May I ask what vessel you are commanding just now, *Captain* Higgins?' And he grinned all over him, and I stood lookin' as red as a lobster, not expectin' to be jeered at by a countryman of my own."

"Nat'rally," said the steward, absently helping himself to a fresh supply of whisky.

"Hold hard, there," said Captain Higgins, gently yet firmly repossessing himself of the bottle. "I own I was took aback. But I asked him to come up here and see me put my men through the Briches Drill the next arternoon, and he said he'd come. 'Good arternoon,' says I. 'Good arternoon, *Captain* Higgins,' says he, in the same silly, jeerin' kind of way; and I went off makin' up my mind to get even with him."

"And did you?" asked the steward, again absently feeling for the bottle.

The Captain drew it back to his side of the table "In course I did. He come up next day, and the men went through the drill. Then I made 'em put on their cork jackets, and we took him out into deep water. He, not knowin' Turkish, didn't suspect nothing when I gave the word to upset the lifeboat. When she'd righted, we all got in again, 'cept him. He couldn't swim a stroke, so I poked out an oar, and he held on to it.

"'Haul me in, my good fellow,' says he sharply. 'You've spoilt my clothes with your confounded clumsiness.'

"Somehow, that oar dipped, and he got his mouth full of water. 'Are you going to leave me here all night?' he says, as if the truth was beginning to strike him. 'If your men was my men, I'd have a word to say when I got 'em on board ship again.'

"'I'm generally called *Captain* Higgins by my friends,' said I, giving the oar another jerk.

"'I'll die first,' says he, as soon as he could get his mouth open.

"I pulls out my pipe and begins to smoke. As the sun went down, the water got chilly. 'Are you going to keep me here all night, you infernal scoundrel?' he asks at last.

"'*Captain* Higgins is quite willing to take you in again,' says I, quiet like.

"He looked round again and saw some porpoises driving the fish in shore. Being new to the place, he took 'em for sharks. 'I'll be obliged to you if you'll haul me into the boat, *Captain* Higgins,' he says quite civilly. 'If it rested with me I'd see you d——'"

"Ladies!" said the steward severely. "Ladies, 'Iggins."

"'I'd see you further first' he says; 'but me being an officer and my life being of some use to my country, I'll be obliged to you, *Captain* Higgins, if you'll haul me in before those sharks have a go at me.'"

"And then?"

"I hauled him in and gave him a nip of whisky. When he saw they was only porpoises and not sharks he turned quite green, but he apologises like a gentleman and asks me to dinner."

"Was it a good dinner?" asked the steward.

"I don't remember," said Captain Higgins, somewhat shortly. "All I know is that it took me two days to weave my way up here again after it. Mrs. Higgins knows more about it than I do. Hush, here she comes."

G. B. BURGIN.

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SHORT TRUTHS.

Town Crier asks: "What is the most common name for a street in London?"———In the 40,000 streets of London, "Park" is the name which is most frequently repeated. There are no fewer than 314 streets in which the word Park figures, such as Park Street, Park Lane, Park Place, etc.

E. S.—It costs the country between a million and a million and a quarter of money annually to keep our soldiers and sailors supplied with clothes.

H. H.—It is a mistake to suppose that children grow faster by night than by day. Light, air, and exercise are all necessary for rapid and healthy growth, and those children who are brought up in the air and sunshine, and live a great part of their time out of doors, are those in whom growth is most rapid.

L. D.—The first domesticated animal seems to have been the dog. The most ancient variety in Europe was the so-called peat-dog, which belonged to the Neolithic period. Four other varieties were known in the Bronze and the lake-dwelling periods. Direct descendants of these are the German hunting-hound, the shepherd's dog, and the poodle.

Alice.—There are 270 officials in the Queen's household.

F. R. C. S. writes describing another of Nature's many barometers. He says: "A piece of rock salt, say one cubic inch in size, suspended by a string from any convenient nail near to a window, will faithfully foretell the weather. During dull, but not rainy weather, a slight amount of moisture gathers on the salt, and the approach of rain is shown by that moisture collecting in a drop, which hangs pendant until the shower falls. Then, as if in affinity with the rain, it breaks away, followed by other drops, with some rapidity if the rainfall is a heavy one. The advent of dry weather is, of course, indicated by a total lack of moisture. Such a piece of salt will give correct indications, up to the limit of its power, for a whole year."

Anxious.—It is not a fact that genius and stoutness never go together. Plenty of men of genius have been fat. Dr. Johnson, Balzac, Rossini, and Dumas the elder are examples of men whose circumference has been almost as great as their talents.

Leonard.—The Prince of Wales holds three dukedoms, those of Cornwall, Rothesay, and Saxe-Coburg Gotha; three earldoms, those of Chester, Carrick, and Dublin; and one baronetcy, that of Renfrew. Besides these titles, he has the right to call himself Lord of the Isles of Scotland and Prince of Saxony.

Mabel.—There is no reason why your canary should not live to be twelve or fifteen years of age if you look after it properly. Those flying at liberty in their native island live to a much more advanced age, however.

C. M. W.—The custom of men wearing black clothes for evening dress is said to have had its origin in the black military tunic which was worn nearly three hundred years ago.

Fish is very fond of the humble bloater, and is afraid that the supply will fail. "It is estimated that fishermen take 900,000,000 annually on our coasts!" he writes in dismay.———You will be still more horrified to learn that man is responsible for only 5 per cent. of the destruction wrought upon your favourite fish. Its enemies, including birds, are very numerous. Some authorities place the figure much higher than you. However, the mother herring lays 30,000 eggs a year, so the supply is likely to be maintained.

Couvre-Feu.—No, it is not quite like the curfew bell, although it is a curious custom. At Seoul, in Corea, every man is bound by law to retire to his home when the bronze bell of the city has proclaimed the hour of sunset. This is the time for closing the gates, and any man caught in the streets after that hour is liable to a flogging. Women, however, are allowed to go about and visit their friends.

Nag.—You are thinking of Incitatus, the horse of the Roman Emperor, Caligula, which was made a priest and consul, had a manger of ivory, and drank wine from a golden pail.

Anglo-Saxon writes to ask what nation I consider to be the best behaved and most well mannered people in Europe?———The Norwegians, undoubtedly. They, of all classes, exhibit the peculiar external attributes of high breeding in a most remarkable degree. Haughtiness and cringing seem equally unknown among them. They possess a quiet sense of dignity and independence, no doubt owing to the fact that they are owners by inheritance of the land upon which they live, and that they have never passed through the degrading stage of feudal tyranny and serfdom. The peculiar absence of snobbishness and flunkeyism in Norway is largely attributable to the fact that aristocratic influences, the aping of style, and our prevalent ideas of "station" and "social position" are so little known there.

T. H. asks: "What are the privileges accorded to members of Parliament out of the House?"———All I have been able to discover is the right to sit in a particular pew at St. Margaret's, Westminster, and that of procuring a reading order at the British Museum without the signature of a London householder.

A Constant Reader has a bet with a friend as to whether there are any mines in existence a mile deep. His friend says there are not; he maintains that there are.———I am afraid you are the one who must pay up this time, for the deepest mine in existence is the Lambert coal mine in Belgium, with a depth of 3,490 feet. The second in depth is the Birkenberg silver mine of Austria, 3,280 feet, and the third the Zwickan coal mine with a depth of 2,637 feet.

D. C. D.—The percentage of twins to all births differs widely in different countries. Ireland stands highest in this respect with 17½, and Spain lowest with 8½ births of twins per 1,000 births. In England the number is 11 per 1,000 and in Scotland 11½.

A. P. P. asks: "Which tree in this country is the first to lose its leaves?"———Season and locality have a great deal to do with this question. Taking the country all over in average seasons, probably the horse-chestnut is the tree which first loses its leaves. Its foliage appears very early in the spring, and it is only to be expected, therefore, that it should wither and fall at a correspondingly early period. Often chestnut leaves begin to litter the ground as early as the month of July.

E. C. H. asks: "How much should a person eat?"———Doctors disagree, and always have disagreed, as to the quantity of food a day required by Nature for the support of the human system. Most of them seem to think that between five and six pounds of solid and liquid food is the golden mean between excess and improper abstinence, but, after all, the quantity of food that may be beneficially taken cannot be regulated by fixed rules. It depends upon the size, the occupation and habits of the individual, and other conditions, and can only be ascertained by individual experience.

R. B.—Hazel eyes are believed to be more subject to disease than those of any other colour. This opinion arises from the fact that makers of artificial eyes are more often called upon to provide those of this hue than any other, in spite of the fact that hazel eyes are by no means the most common.

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